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NUMBER 1

"SIR HUGH": A STUDY IN BALLADRY*

by JAMES R. WOODALL

SOME YEARS AGO, while taking a course in Chaucer, I was intrigued by the Prioress's Tale. The possibilities of the situation seemed almost endless. Yet, aside from its appropriateness to the tale-teller and Chaucer's scheme, the tale was disappointing. It was a surprise to me at that time to find that Chaucer's source was a ballad or a legend from which a ballad had grown. The ballad I found superior to Chaucer's tale (always excepting Chaucer's larger purpose). This was the beginning of my interest in the ballad as something more than the folk-songs I had sung and heard sung all my life, and the things in Sophomore anthologies sometimes demonstrated by the instructor from phonograph records. As a consequence of this interest, I have from time to time returned to study the ballad listed by Child as number 155 and labelled "Sir Hugh, or, The Jew's Daughter" and variously called "Hugh of Lincoln," "The Duke's Daughter," "Little Harry Hughes," "The Little School Boy," "A Little Boy Threw His Ball So High," "Little Sir Hugh," "The Jew's Garden," "It Rained, It Mist," "A Little Boy Lost His Ball," and similar titles. My studies have led me to many conclusions or mere speculations about ballads in general. In this paper I would like to open a few of those speculations or reach a few of those conclusions and especially to find out just what the ballad "Sir Hugh" is. Twenty-five versions, including those in Child, were used in the study and are referred to herein by Roman numerals (the sources are appended).

The usual narration is third person with considerable dialog. Scarborough¹ claims the exceptional first person narration as negroid,

*This paper was read in the Folklore Section of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association held in Columbia, South Carolina, November 26, 1954.

¹Dorothy Scarborough, *A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains* (New York, 1937), pp. 65, 66.

but of the three exceptions (IV, IX, XIV) two are distinctly non-negroid (IX, XIV).²

One element common to every version, we note immediately, is the ball game. The players vary from twenty-four to one, but there is always a ball game. Five versions make it a form of football (I, II, III, VII, XIX); two make it a form of handball or tennis (XV, XXIII); five leave the kind of ball game uncertain (IV, VI, VIII, XVII, XXV); but the thirteen other versions make it a form of "catch" ball. The ball always goes over a wall onto forbidden premises, but Child's statement that "the boy comes to his death from breaking a Jew's window"³ is not justified, only two versions (X, XIX⁴) specifically mentioning it and four (I, II, III, VII) possibly intimating it. Chaucer's version gives a more "literarily" acceptable motive by indicating that the Jews resent the singing of "Alma Redemptoris," but even that is unsatisfactory. In most cases (13) the ball falls into the Jew's garden, forbidden ground (which introduces and demonstrates the emotion and prejudice involved). It is important to make the point that the ball game is not an exclusive element of "Sir Hugh," however. Ballads such as "The Cruel Brother," "The Twa Brothers," "Tam Lin," "Queen Eleanor's Confession," "Child Waters," "Bonny Baby Livingstone," and "The Bitter Withy" include ball games, and "Glenlogie" also has interesting parallels. Thus despite the prevalence of the ball game, we cannot conclude that it is a necessary element to the ballad *situation*.

Curiously, though the time of the year varies widely, the versions, with only three or four exceptions, have the ball game played in weather not at all favorable to such a game: it rains, snows, or mists, in expressions similar to those of "The Cottage Near a Wood," "The Unquiet Grave," and "The Bitter Withy." Time elements have par-

²Though third person narration is undoubtedly more common, many do use first person. Most often it is a first person who is merely reporting, does not participate as a character, and who hesitates not at all to address the listener. But we find examples of first person narration by actual characters, as well: note primarily Child 106, "The Famous Flower of Serving Men," which, however, contains "some improvements"; note also Child 204 A, "Jamie Douglas," of better merit (the listener is not directly addressed). There are even examples of changes from one person to another: Child 111, "Crow and Pie," begins as first person narration but shifts in stanza 5 to third person; Child 295 A, B, "The Brown Girl," also shifts from first person to third person narration in stanza 5.

³Francis James Child, editor, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston, 1882), III, 239.

⁴In which, miraculously, *all* of the windows are broken!

allels particularly in "Allison Gross" and "Tam Lin." All elements of time and weather suggest witchery or ill-omen, despite the wide variety and in defiance of realism. Though only six of the ballad versions fail to give any location for the event and only two are as vague as "our town," the location is not an important element. Three versions name Lincoln, eight name Scotland, and the remainder are corruptions or malapropisms of one of those names (for example, "Merry-Cockland," "Mirryland town," "Maitland town," "Linkin," "London lanes"), and thus it would seem that Scotland was important to the ballad. But the obviously later, American versions do not need it. The fact that elements of time, weather, ball game, and locale co-exist in contradiction indicates that despite their prevalence, none are of great importance to the ballad situation, that they are elements from other sources to introduce our situation, to allow for incremental repetition, and to focus as we remark later. That they have prevailed is testimony of their effectiveness in tone-setting and characterization.

The boy himself, with one exception ("Willie"), is always either named Hugh or not named at all. Though the descriptions are scanty, the inference always seems to be that he is an unusually handsome lad, sweet, bonny, pretty, who catches the eye of the girl, who can't have him, consequently or subsequently murders him. His mother does not appear or is unnamed in all save three versions (Lady Maisry or Lady Helen — stock names).

Such a situation as the unattainable lad and the feared girl accounts for the earlier persistence of the Jew's Daughter versus the Good Catholic. The girl is, in all except five versions an unnamed Jew's Daughter; in one (XXIII) she is a sneaking, crazy gypsy;⁵ in three she is a sex-starved, crotchety old maid (V, XVIII, XXV); and in the other (XIX) she is an adventurous Duke's daughter, full of curiosity and disdain and lacking companions from her own class.⁶ She is, like the cruel stepmother, the jealous sister, the dangerous mermaid, and the like, a stock figure — we might call her the passionate sadist. That she is most often Jewish is testimony to the more widespread and universal Jewish prejudice, I should say. Most often she is young, "fair," and finely dressed. Always a little above the class of the boy or out of it in a separate category, always alone, always asso-

⁵Cf. "The Gypsy Laddie," Child 200.

⁶Cf. "The King's Tochter Lady Jean," Child 52 A; "Johnnie Scot," Child 99 a; and "The Cruel Mother," Child 20 P. Mention of the castle may have signified "nobility" to Americans, especially in a Jewish community.

ciated with witchery by the color of green, by an apple, by endearing terms,⁷ or some such common device, the girl solicits the boy who has been warned against her. If Hugh is murdered simply because of a misdirected ball, a Jewess or other prejudicial character, especially female, is not necessary. The lost ball is simply a focal point, a reason for the female's attention being directed to the particular boy. And that is why the ball game is brought in and the contradictory weather indicated.

But he won't go into her house. Why? The somewhat fatidic second stanza of version XIII may be a passerby's warning, may represent Hugh's own premonition, may be his mother's warning, or may be the remnant of a little bird's warning; but it gives us the underlying common reason: One simply does not go into certain places of evil; tradition, superstition, intuition forbid it. But this reason is rarely expressed. In stanza 5 of I, Hugh won't go because of something she had done to his father; though this is unique in our versions, it would not be difficult to read into many of them, and to develop a background of jealousy and envy as motives. "Because my heart is blood" the senselessness of which screams corruption, is the reason in IV; because his mother, or, more logically, the female would make his blood fall, in six versions (XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XVI, and—because his mother would "make it the bloody ball" is obviously and amusingly a mishearing—XIX); because he has heard that whoever goes in never comes out, in four versions (XX, XXI, XXII, XXV); because she is out of her head, in XXIII; — these are sufficient reasons. The rest of the versions are silent on reasons or are illogical—mixtures or forgettings.

The temptation is always put to him. The temptation is usually either a witch or a sex symbol, though it is often coupled with objects of greed, apples (in nineteen versions), cherries (in nine versions), and rings (in ten versions) being the most common enticements. Balls, chains, sugar, figs, and a "finer thing" are the other specific enticements. One version (XI) does omit the enticements, but the omission is an obvious forgetting on the part of the singer. In one version (VIII) the boy is simply invited to come in and dine, and in another (II), Mae West-like, to "cum up and play wi me." The "golden chair" of IV is probably a corruption of "chain." Parallels to these temptations

⁷She knows his name in II, III, VI, VII, X, XI, XVI; which would certainly indicate that she has had her eye on him previously. She calls him dear (II, III, XII), pretty (IV, IX, XI, XIII, XV, XIX, XX, XXIV), or sweet (II, III, V, XIV) or even more familiarly "My sweet Saluter" (XIV), "my little one" (XXV), "My pretty play-fellow" (XV), or "You little lambkin" (XXI, XXII).

are found everywhere from Genesis to "Snow White" and in ballads of which we might list a few Child references: 1 A; 5 A; 15 A, B; 17 A; 35; 37 A, C; 54; 204 A. The symbolism is very thinly veiled in most of these cases.

In all versions we have a paucity of description of the house and its premises. Generally it has a garden in which is often a well or, more specifically, a draw-well. Sometimes the place is a castle, which may account for nobility in some versions. Various rooms are mentioned. One tells us of nine dark doors; another of one and nine chambers. Three speak of one, two, and her own chamber, successively the fairest of them all, the flower of them all, the worst of them all. Seven versions have a hall. Other rooms are a kitchen, a parlor, one stone chamber, a little dark room, a far back room, and a cellar. The golden chair of three versions becomes a "chair of state" in one, a little chair in another, and a guilty chair in another.

The murder is a particularly brutal one involving a knife and blood. Every version makes this quite cold-blooded, deliberate. Though we have seen that the murder motive is weak unless we resort to symbolism and other inferences, the circumstances of the murder are clearer. Most often, as befits our symbolism, or as may at times lead to speculation upon a superstition of cannibalism or satanism, the murder is committed on a form of dressing table or dressing board, corrupted to dresser drawer in one version (XXV) and cooling board in another (V). Other common locations given are the chair, or more generally the cellar or a sound-proof dark room.

The murder weapon is the old ballad stand-by, the penknife, which degenerates often enough into pen, or into some other form of knife—carving knife, butcher knife, or bow knife. Despite the impracticability of the penknife for a bloody murder, it has persisted in ballads, but usually indicates a lack of premeditation, crimes of passion or sudden suicides. Only four versions (XIV, XVII, XXI, XXII) of our ballad fail to show interest in the weapon, and two of those (XXI, XXII) are preoccupied with preparations to catch the blood.

Most of the versions dwell upon the bloodiness of the murder. *In seven versions (I, II, III, VII, VIII, XV, X) the victim is stuck like a pig or swine; like a sheep, in seven versions (IV, V, IX, XI, XIII, XVI, XXIV); both common colloquial similes. In nine versions the murderess makes provisions for catching the blood in a basin or cup, which returns us to thoughts of satanism or other orgies, even to cannibalism.

After the murder comes wide variance. I say "after the murder" because the versions put things in that sequence, however illogical. In six versions (I, II, III, VII, VIII, XIX) the murderess speaks to the victim, usually in mockery. Version XIX, stanza 10, says: "Lie there, lie there, little Harry," she cried,/ "And God forbid you to swim,/ If you be a disgrace to me,/ Or to any of my friends."—This passage definitely has the sex connotations we have spoken of as involved in the motive. In eight versions the boy begs for his life—too late. In numerous versions he gives the standard ballad instructions for burial. In seven cases the body is rolled in lead; in twelve cases, it is thrown into a well. In some versions, the bleeding to death is described with interesting implications that would involve a paper themselves. In over half the versions, the boy's mother is involved; in eight cases it is she who discovers the body. Most of the versions have some elements of "Christian superstition," ghosts and miracles, as in Chaucer's version. Most of these elements are common in other ballads.

I have attempted merely to give you a sampling of the methods and materials used to draw the conclusions I should now like to mention. First, what is the persistent story of the ballad? There was an active, attractive little boy. A mysterious or awful female lured him into her house. She enjoyed a bloody slaying of the lad. If you will remark the summary of the story, you will note that those words which make the story interesting are words of *situation*. The ballads most similar to "Sir Hugh" are "The Bitter Withy" or "The Holy Well"⁸ and "Young Hunting," especially in Chappell's version.⁹ Yet no matter

⁸See especially Francis B. Gummere, editor, *The Popular Ballad* (Boston, 1907), pp. 228-229; and *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, London, II (1905-1906), 200-204 and V (1914), 1-6.

⁹Louis W. Chappell, *Folk-Songs of Roanoke and the Albemarle* (Morgantown, W. Va., 1939), p. 22. Other interesting comparisons can be found in the following sources not cited elsewhere in this paper: Child 1 C; 9 A; 10; 11 A, B; 14 A; 16 A, E; 17 G; 20 B, C; 24 A, B; 38 A; 39 A; 40; 43; 49; 58 B, G; 62 A; 63 A; 64 B; 66 B; 67 A; 73; 77; 78; 79; 86 A*; 88 A; 89 A; 91 A; 93; 95; 97 B; 114 A, B, D; 120 A; 156 A; 173 A; 212 A; 222 C; 229 A; 231 A; 238 A, B; 247; 262; 266 A; 298; and these: Arthur Palmer Hudson, editor, *Specimens of Mississippi Folk-Lore* (Mississippi Folk-Lore Society, 1928), p. 95; Hyder E. Rollins, *Cavalier and Puritan: Ballads and Broad-sides Illustrating the Period of the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660* (New York: 1923), pp. 141, 239; *Journal*, I, 213 and VI, 19; Countess Evelyn Martinengo-Cesaresco, *Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs* (Everyman's Library Edition, 1914), p. 27; Hubert G. Shearin and Josiah H. Combs, *A Syllabus of Kentucky Folk-Songs* (Lexington, Ky., 1911), p. 8; Genesis 2-3; Judges 14-16.

how many parallels of event and phrase we find, we find no parallels of situations with "Sir Hugh." It is not, then, the story but the situation which makes the ballad, the circumstances, the allusions, the hints, the mysteries, the sympathies. Of course, the incremental repetition makes it dramatic and lyric. Those basic elements of situation that persist are not the religious, but the mysterious and the sexual. It is absurd to apologize, as Child does, for the Jewish prejudice evident in the ballad. The same situation, normally with sexes reversed, is behind much of the black-white fear and prejudice in the United States today. What I am driving at is that sex and consequent mystery make the ballad, are the ballad called "Sir Hugh."

One of the most outstanding characteristics of the ballads collected by Child is sex. Maidenheads and chastity are lost or protected constantly, with frantic heroic messengers running, riding, and swimming all over the place. Combats over sex constantly occur. The ballads may speak of a few of the refinements or perversions of "civilized" sex; yet, resisting or succumbing to climbing into bed or rolling on the sward with a member of the opposite sex—with marriage in the offing only sometimes—is a constant theme with remarkably few variations. In fact, besides her dowry, a woman had little else than her sex and her child-bearing ability to make her useful to men and balladeers (originally perhaps women). Give any ballad collector enough corn liquor and he'll sing you bawdy folk-songs all night.

And hatred with consequent revenge and fear—in the ballads everyone hates someone else: Highlander hates Lowlander, Lowlander hates Englishman, Englishman hates Frenchman, clan hates clan, the brave hates the wise, the brownette hates the blonde, the mother-in-law hates the daughter-in-law, brother hates sister's lover, and so on and on—all of which makes for an exciting and merry old time of rapine, murder, maming, or worse. And there is almost never a doubt as to the recipient of the ballad's sympathies—folk are seldom neutral. The ballad is not objective, however much selection may make it appear so. (It is an interesting study in point of view to compare for example, "Old Robin of Portingale," Child 80; "Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard," Child 81; and "The Bonny Birdy," Child 82;—or the A and D versions of Child 83; "Child Maurice.") Actions and thoughts are not weighed on the scales of justice and wisdom but on the butcher's scales, thumb-heavy, of prejudice and emotion. Despite the admiration of balladeers for heroic and virile deeds, brave or foolhardy actions, and high moral intentions, sex, hatred, and prejudice with revenge and fear de-

termine the ballad situations in a large proportion of the ballads. Elizabethan popular songs and sonnets are refined, Italianated, out of this same stuff.

"Sir Hugh" is a prime example of the basic and primitive ballad urges stripped of the confusing, so-called epic or heroic elements. "It's a pity" said John Wesley, "that Satan should have all the best tunes." Add "Sir Hugh" to this list.

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APPENDED LIST OF SOURCES OF BALLAD VERSIONS:

- I, II. Helen Child Sargent and George Lyman Kittredge, editors, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston, 1932).
- III. Child.
- IV. Alphonso C. Smith, "Ballads Surviving in the United States," *The Musical Quarterly*, II (January, 1916, #1).
- V. Dorothy Scarborough, *A Song Catcher in Southern Mountains* (New York, 1937).
- VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV. Child.
- XVI. Scarborough.
- XVII. Arthur Palmer Hudson, editor, *Specimens of Mississippi Folk-Lore* (Mississippi Folk-Lore Society, 1928).
- XVIII. Maurice Matteson, *Beech Mountain Folk-Songs and Ballads* (New York: 1939).
- XIX. Child.
- XX. Mary O. Eddy, *Ballads and Songs from Ohio* (New York: 1939).
- XXI. Mellinger Edward Henry, editor, *Folk-Songs from the Southern Highlands* (New York; 1938).
- XXII. Scarborough.
- XXIII. Henry.
- XXIV. *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, London, I (1904).
- XXV. Byron Arnold, *Folksongs of Alabama* (University, Alabama, 1950).

THE WITCH OF OXFORD

by ALLEN CABANISS

AT ST. PETER'S CEMETERY, Oxford, Mississippi, high and low, rich and poor, known and unknown, lie side by side in the inexorable democracy of death. Here and there are the dead of five wars from the Mexican War to World War II. Near the gate is the tomb with the curious astronomical inscription marking the grave of "Judge" A. B. Longstreet, antebellum president of the University of Mississippi and author of "Georgia Scenes." Not far away rests the mortal part of his eminent son-in-law, L. Q. C. Lamar, a former associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.

As one rambles on, he comes to the family plot where at some date in the future will be placed the body of William Faulkner, a victim of that final destiny which he has so morbidly portrayed in many of his novels. Then suddenly the eye lights upon a simple white slab which bears the name of Miss Lillie Stoate¹ and the dates of her birth and death, November 13, 1871, and December 3, 1946. In her day, so says the town newspaper (the *Oxford Eagle*, June 26, 1941), Miss Lillie had "gained a place alongside William Faulkner as Oxford's nationally known citizen."

In late March, 1939, there had been no rain around Lakeland and Frostproof, Florida, since January, and the citrus growers were alarmed. But someone had heard that Miss Lillie Stoate of Oxford could cause rain, and on March 23 the *Eagle* reported that she was enroute to Florida at the expense of the State Citrus Commission. On Friday, March 24, she was sitting by the shore of Lake Reedy. Three days later, on Monday morning, it began to rain. The following day the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* carried her picture and an account of the

¹The meager sources for the case of Miss Lillie Stoate are as follows: (1) Letter, Miss Lillie Stoate to me, July 22, 1941; (2) Replies to my questionnaires from E. M. Regenold, Armored, Ark., Jan. 24, 1949; Carlos B. Mastuson, Angleton, Tex., Jan. 24, 1949; Miss Edna Barry, Oxford, Miss., Jan. 26, 1949; L. W. Clements, Jr., Plant City, Fla., Jan. 31, 1949; (3) Interviews with Miss Edna Barry and Miss Kate Skipwith, Oxford, Miss., January and February, 1949; and (4) Press reports, Oxford, Miss., *Eagle*, March 23, 30, 1939, November 21, 1940, June 26, 1941; Memphis, Tenn., *Commercial Appeal*, March 28, 1939, Jan. 22, 1940, Nov. 21, 1940, June 21, 1941; Plant City, Fla., *Courier*, Nov. 19, 22, 1940; *Life* (magazine), April 10, 1939. The letter, replies to questionnaires, and report of interviews are in my possession. The internal references within the article are probably sufficient without detailed documentation.

incident. R. X. Williams, the mayor of Oxford, sent her a telegram of congratulation and planned a gala reception on her return. Magazine photographers had been present, and on April 10, 1939, *Life* published her picture under this laconic remark:

Lillie Stoate, 67, who claims she can produce rain by sitting near some body of water, was hustled to Florida, March 24, by drought-worried citrus growers. She settled herself by Lake Reedy. Three days later, it began raining for the first time since January. Meteorologists dismissed the fall as an "ordinary spring disturbance."

Although publicity was distasteful to her, Miss Stoate now had to bear the burden of notoriety. Calls began to come asking for her services in other drouth-stricken parts of the nation, and there were requests for interviews, radio appearances, and newsreel pictures (*Eagle*, March 30, 1937; November 21, 1940; *Commercial Appeal*, January 22, 1940). She therefore accepted the invitation of the Harlingen, Texas, Chamber of Commerce to attend the Mid-Winter Valley Fair in late January, 1940 (*Commercial Appeal*, January 22, 1940). In her own account of the trip, Miss Stoate said that she was called upon "to show the people of Texas how I make it rain. Stayed 9 days there, and it rained and snowed all over Texas. Have not been needed there since!"

In November, 1940, she was back in Florida, in response to an invitation from Plant City. She began her vigil by Lake Walden, three miles south of the town, where thousands of people came to watch her (*Plant City Courier*, November 22, 1940). The rain fell on Wednesday, November 20, not only in Plant City, but also elsewhere throughout the state. Numerous telegrams from merchants of Haines City, Orlando, Lakeland, and Winter Haven, arrived thanking her for the rain.

By June, 1941, the area about Mississippi county, Arkansas, and the adjoining Pemiscot county, Missouri, was suffering its most severe drouth in ten years. The *Commercial Appeal* of June 21 reported that the "fields are ankle deep in dust The total precipitation for the year . . . is estimated to be about 12 inches deficient." In desperation farmers from both counties turned to Miss Stoate. In reply to an urgent telephone call on June 20, she agreed to go to Armorel, Arkansas. On June 26, the *Eagle* stated that she was in Armorel and that she had been sitting by "a small lake for several days now," but that still there had been no rain. Soon she decided that she might be more effective

if she moved to the bank of the Mississippi river, about three miles away. She did so, but after an unsuccessful vigil of ten days, she returned to Oxford. This was Miss Lillie's greatest defeat, although on July 22 she stated that "the Washington weather report tells me the drouth has been broken all over the south." However, there were no further public demonstrations.

Born near Oxford in 1871, Miss Lille was the youngest of three children, two girls and a boy. Her father had come from England when he was about eight years old and, according to oral tradition, was the first soldier to leave Oxford for the Confederate army. After the war, he came back and began work as a wheelwright. On the side he made medicines for both animals and men. His wife came from Pontotoc, about thirty miles east of Oxford.

Lillie Stoaate went through the public schools of the town and through two years at the old Oxford Female Academy. Her father's death left the family dependent upon her, and she had to go to work. She became a seamstress in a local tailor shop. Her mother carded wool and cotton for quilts, and all the family continued to make and sell the medicines. Miss Lillie never attempted to commercialize on her ability to cause rain. For that, she asked no remuneration beyond the expense of travel, room, and board, which seems to have been generously offered on all four "professional" visits.

With the passing of time, it became evident that her brother and her sister were both mentally aberrant. The sister died early in the twentieth century, as did her mother. The brother died in 1915. Miss Lillie, thin and gaunt, about five feet ten inches tall, with her straight black hair, piercing blue eyes, and inevitable umbrella, took on the characteristics of an eccentric. Moreover, as she grew older, she became almost totally deaf.

A prodigious reader about the hereafter and the supernatural, Miss Stoaate liked to talk with kind neighbors about the medicines she still made, about her power to cause rain, and about religion. Just before her death, she expressed an intense desire to see "the other side." She was an Episcopalian—there are people still living in Oxford who saw her confirmed—but she took no part in the usual activities of St. Peter's parish. A long-time acquaintance has characterized her in these words: "She was a wonderful neighbor, a loyal friend. Honest to a point that she was imposed upon. She was one of the most independent women I have ever known, refusing to let anyone do for her as long as she was able to stand up."

The people of Oxford took no special interest in her alleged weather-making. In fact, it has been said that they did not encourage her in it lest she go insane as did her sister. Miss Lillie, of course, considered herself as the usual prophet without honor in his own town. When her death came in 1946, it was quiet and unnoticed: neither the *Commercial Appeal* nor the *Eagle* carried an obituary. She was no longer "news."

What was this power she claimed to have? Her own account of it is candid and straight-forward. When she was seven years old, she noticed that every time her brother went fishing it rained. At first he denied that there was any causal connection between his action and the weather, but in time came to believe there was. In the early 1900's he moved to a house up the road, away from the place where his mother and sister lived. Miss Lillie soon trained a dog to carry notes to her brother asking him to go fishing when she needed rain for her flowers and vegetable garden.

A year after her brother died, she discovered that she had, as she said—

the same peculiar power over water. All I have to do is stay for 8 or 10 hours on the bank of a body of water—pond, lake, or river and it will cloud up and rain within 24 hrs. right there or close about Costs me no mental or physical exertion. Have no control over the power, except I can stay away from water if I want to. Am sure I was born with it, for I know my brother did not leave it to me. Do not know any more *why* it will rain when I stay near water than you do.

As the Plant City *Courier* of November 19, 1940, stated, "Miss Stoate has no hocus-pocus powders she spreads, says no magic words, just sits by the lake and says rain will come."

Although she knew she had this "gift" as early as 1916, she made no "professional" use of it until she went to Florida in the spring of 1939. The only other recorded instances, in addition to the four described above, are noted in the *Eagle* of March 23, 1939. One occurred in the summer of 1938, when she visited the Mississippi Gulf Coast during a military convention: rains followed. The other occurred on Tuesday, March 14, 1939, her wash-day, on which light showers had fallen in Oxford.

In the course of time, Miss Lillie evolved an elaborate theory of the cause of drouths.

To my understanding, drouths are caused by draining the land, and boring deep wells and pumping too much of the deep water out, and there by putting the water table too low. Am confident Deserts were made by people, in prehistoric times, doing just what we are doing now.

According to the *Eagle* of June 26, 1941, she even thought that radios took rain "out of the air." In the same newspaper account a United Press correspondent is quoted as saying that she was planning to go out to Death Valley, sit by the Great Salt Lake, and put her powers to a severe test.

The Florida reaction to her seems in both instances to have been gratitude and widespread interest. In Texas, it was almost embarrassment. In Arkansas, it was curiosity and good-natured humor. The major opposition to Miss Stoate came, according to the *Eagle* of June 26, 1941, from "ignorant Baptist preachers." She herself reported:

Every where I go on these trips have trouble with Baptist ministers—and some others along the same line. The ministers are trying to make the people believe the drouths are, what they call judgments, sent by God to punish them for their sins. However, to my understanding, we—the people—through our ignorance, cause all our own troubles and misfortunes. If the ministers of all churches would take all of the evil out of the Bible and teach only the good, then, after a few generations we would have the Millennium. Am defending God against people who say He will do evil.

Thus, strangely enough, a metaphysical theory enters the story, giving one the strong suspicion that this was a recrudescence of folk-paganism which arose in Oxford one mile from the state university. One cannot but wonder whether the lineage of it stretches all the way back to England!

MIKE HOOTER—THE MAKING OF A MYTH

by JOHN Q. ANDERSON

THE OLD SOUTHWEST produced several legendary heroes who, through the media of the oral tale and the printed story, passed from regional fame to national popularity and thereby became part of the folklore of America. Davy Crockett and Mike Fink are the most obvious examples of this process.¹ Behind these great folk heroes stands a host of less widely known though often equally fascinating figures whose exploits, if recorded at all, lie buried in weekly newspapers or long forgotten books. Mike Hooter, Mississippi bear hunter and lay preacher, is one of these almost forgotten figures. Though he was rather widely publicized in the 1850's, he has not flourished in the manner of Crockett and Fink, though legends about him survive in Mississippi and tales about him are still reprinted.² The evolution of the myth of Mike Hooter from a real man to a legend is a good example of the myth-making process. To see that process at work in this instance, it is necessary first to summarize the legend of Mike Hooter as it appeared in print, next to present the real Michael Hooter of family tradition and official records, then to consider briefly the two writers responsible for the legend, and finally to note how those writers transformed a living man into a legend.

Mike Hooter was the best bear hunter in Yazoo County. Everyone was certain of that, for Mike had told them. In the pioneer days of northern Mississippi the swamps along the Yazoo River were thick with bear, and when Mike's wife wanted "a new bar-skin petticoat" or

¹See Constance Rourke, *Davy Crockett* (New York, 1934), *passim.*, and *ibid.*, *American Humor* (New York, 1931), *passim.*; and Walter Blair and Franklin J. Meine, *Mike Fink, King of Mississippi Keelboatmen* (New York, 1933), *passim.*

²The "Yazoo Sketches," of which Mike Hooter is the central character, appeared originally in 1849 and 1850 in the *New Orleans Daily* and *Weekly Delta* and were immediately reprinted in the *Spirit of the Times*, New York weekly sporting journal. One or more of the sketches were reprinted in such anthologies of humor as Thomas A. Burke's *Polly Peablossom's Wedding*; and *Other Tales* (Philadelphia, 1851); W. E. Burton's *Cyclopedia of Wit and Humor* (New York, 1858, 1866); and T. C. Halliburton's two extensive collections, *Traits of American Humor*, by Native Authors (London, 1852, 1866, 1873), and *The Americans at Home; or Byeways, Backwoods, and Prairie* (London, 1854, 1873; Philadelphia, 1854?). Four of the sketches were recently reprinted in V.L.O. Chittick's *Ring-Tailed Roarers; Tall Tales of the American Frontier, 1830-50* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1943).

his daughter, Sal, wanted "some bar's ile to slick her har with," Mike went on a bear hunt. On one such hunt, as he described it, Mike, with his "old two-shooter" and a pack of hounds, set off into the canebrake looking for "bar sine." Soon his hounds, old Bumper and Echo, found the trail and began "talking" to the bear, "most pertickler musical," as Mike put it, and, he added, "Tom Goin's fiddle and my Sal's singin, and all the camp meeting hallelujahs you ever hearn, warnt a patchin to it." But soon the dogs changed their tune and rushed out of the cane with the bear, "puffin and blowin like a young steamboat," right after them. Mike blazed away at the onrushing bear but only wounded him. The dogs soon had the bear at bay in a nearby creek. Thinking the animal could not escape, Mike, always eager to talk to whomever or whatever would listen, made a speech to the bear:

Good mornin', Mister Bar. How did you leave Misses Bar and all the little Bars [Mike inquired]? Takin' a bath, I diskiver, with your breeches on! . . . You look hearty, Mister Bar. Good livin' up in Jim Stewart's punkin patch, I spose? . . . the ile what's in your hide would slick the har of all the galls in our neck of o' woods 'till the cows come home. You carries a most too much dead capital in that ar skin of yourn, any how; and if it's the same to you, I'll jist peel the bark off'n you, and larn you the rudiments of perlitical economy . . . Mr. Bar, the tail of your jacket is a trifle top short for cold weather, and a feller might kalkilate the tailor that made your coat was an idee sparein of his cloth . . .³

The bear, apparently unappreciative of Mike's wit, attacked so furiously that Mike retreated and gave up the chase, and so there was no bear-skin petticoat for Mrs. Hooter and no bear oil for Sally's hair. The bear knew, of course, that his days were numbered and that he would not escape another day.

That the bear should get away from Mike that day was a result of the unique sagacity of Yazoo bears, for which Mike had the greatest respect. Unlike Tennessee bears which stupidly allowed Davy Crockett to kill one hundred and five of them in less than a year, Yazoo bears were the world's shrewdest. As Mike said:

It's no use talkin' . . . bout your Polar Bar and Grisly Bar and all that sort of varmint what you read about. They ain't no whar, for the big black customer what circumlocated down in our neck o' woods beats 'em all hollow. I've hearn of some monsos [mons-

³"Mike Hooter's Fight with the 'Bar,' A Yazoo Sketch," *Spirit of the Times*, XIX (Nov. 10, 1849), 38.

trous] explites kicked up by the brown Bars, sich as totein off a yoke o' oxen and eatin humans raw, and all that sort o' thing; and Capen Parry tells us a yarn 'bout a big white bar what 'muses hisself climbing up the North Pole and slidin down again to keep his hide warm; but all that ain't a circumstance to what I've saw.⁴

Mike illustrated the peculiar cunning of Yazoo bears with a tale showing how one outwitted his neighbor, Ike Hamblin. Ike's dogs chased a bear in a thicket but would not go in after it. Ike leaned his gun against a saplin and went to gather rocks to chunk the dogs. The bear, unnoticed by Ike, took the gun, blew the powder out of the pan, took out the flint, and replaced the gun against the tree. When Ike recovered the gun and drew a bead on the bear, the animal stood "with the thumb of his right paw on the eend of his smeller, and wigling his tother fingers" while Ike snapped furiously.⁵

As the years went by, Mike's fame as a bear hunter spread, largely because of his boasting. He came to be known as the greatest bear hunter in the county, perhaps in the state. His name in the Indian language was said to signify "the grave of bears"; the ground around his homestead was white with the bones of bears he had killed; he could easily have dispatched the "Big Bear of Arkansas" without a flick of the eyelash; the whole bear population, in fact, was threatened with extinction. "When his horn sounded—so tradition ran—the bears began to draw lots to see who should die that day, for painful experience had told them the uselessness of all endeavoring to escape."⁶ Mike Hooter, the Nimrod of the Yazoo bottoms, was indeed "a mighty hunter before the Lord."

And truly before the Lord did Mike hunt bear, for he was a pious man, an elder in the Methodist church, in fact, and something of a preacher. His chief chronicler said, "... at prayer and camp meetings, where bombast passed current for eloquence, and loud shouting for the fervor of sanctimonious zeal, he shone effulgent, chief of exhorters."⁷ It was indeed debatable which Mike liked more, a good bear hunt or a

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Ike, by the way, was mortally wounded in a fight with a bear but lived three days afterwards, long enough to enjoy a nice, juicy bear steak before he died. Mrs. T. C. Guion of Phoenix, Yazoo County, Miss., had this version of Ike's death from a great niece of Ike's wife.

⁶"The Indefatigable Bear-Hunter," by Henry Clay Lewis, in *Odd Leaves from the Life of a Louisiana Swamp Doctor* (Philadelphia, 1850), p. 165.

⁷"Mike Hooter's Fight with the 'Bar.'"

camp meeting. Both provided the strenuous excitement he loved. In the summer, he packed his family off to the meeting grounds, where he could enjoy the loud and strong preaching. Describing such a meeting, Mike said:

... Parson James, he was up on er log er preachin', an' er goin' it 'hard from the tomb!' I tell you what Brother James was loud that day! Thar he was, with the Bible on er board—stickin' 'twene two saplins, an' he was er comin' down on it with his two fists worse nor maulin rails; an' er stompin his feet, an' er slobberin' at the mouth, an' er cuttin up shines worse nor er bob-tail bull in fly time!⁸

Such preaching Mike enjoyed because it "convicted" the sinners with obvious results.

Torrectly I spy the heatherns [Mike said] they commence takin' on, and the sperit it begin to move um for true—for Brother Sturtevant's ole nigger Cain, an' all uv um, they 'gin to kinder groan an' whine, an' fell erbout like er corn stalk in er storm, an' Brother Bridle, he begin er rubbin his hands and slappin' um together, an' scramblin' about on his knees, an' er cuttin' up like mad!⁹

Though he was not a full-time minister, Mike himself could deliver a "sarmint" when the occasion demanded. Evidently he could be "loud" too, as he said of Parson James, for the hill boys called him "Mike Shouter" and Arch Coony said, "... his preachin' ain't nuthin' but loud holerin' no how!" Mike almost "wolloped" Arch for that statement. When the two met on a bear hunt, Mike challenged Arch, in whom he saw "the devil big as a bull." "Then I pulled off my ole Sunday-go-to-meetin' coat," Mike said, "an' slammed it down on a stump, an' sez I, 'Lay thar, ole Methodist, till I learn this coon some sense!' " Arch backed down, for he was not about to fight Mike, whose fame as a rough-and-tumble fighter almost equalled that of his talent for bear hunting.

Mike's most annoying detractors were people in the towns in Yazoo County, some of whom whispered that "bear hunting was his devotion, and preaching his sport." Mike had an Old Testament prophet's antagonism toward towns and frequently was caustic about

⁸"How Sally Hooter Got Snake-Bit," in *Polly Peablossom's Wedding*, pp. 71-72.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 72.

"the mean folks" in Satartia, Mechanicsburg, and Yazoo City—Sodom, Gomorrah, and Ninevah, respectively. ¹⁰Satartia, he said, was the jumping off place and a mud hole of civilizations; Mechanicsburg was a nest of thieves, and Yazoo City was no better; in fact, it was worse. Even Texas, Mike said, was a better place. When the depression of the late 1830's caused the merchants to cut off Mike's credit, he was angry because he sometimes had to hunt bear on Sunday, which was against his religion. But when a storekeeper sold Mike a pint of whiskey that was half tobacco juice, Mike almost lost his religion, for liquor was an essential to him as food. Whether he was hunting bear, telling a tale, or preaching a sermon, Mike frequently interrupted himself with the friendly suggestion, "Les licker." Indeed of his trinity of hunting, preaching, and drinking, it was difficult to say to which he devoted the most time and affection. And whether he hunted bear on Sunday, hunted evil in the towns in Yazoo County, or hunted a "doggerly" for liquor, Mike Hooter was surely "a mighty hunter before the Lord."

Behind this legendary Mike Hooter stands an actual man, Michael Hooter, stalwart pioneer of Yazoo County, a man whose industry and religious faith produced a fortune and family that even the destruction of the Civil War could not entirely sweep away. Michael Hooter was born on Red River in Louisiana in 1791.¹⁰ His parents had been granted land on the Red River in 1772, to which they had moved from the vicinity of Natchez, then British West Florida. About 1800 the Hooters moved to Jefferson County, Mississippi, and by 1833 Michael Hooter was living in Yazoo County as his name appears on county tax rolls in that year. He was obviously a small planter at that time, for he owned six slaves. During the following years Hooter acquired land and additional slaves and became a planter. Yazoo County, rich in soil and easily accessible by steamboat on the Yazoo River, rapidly became one of the leading cotton growing sections of the ante-bellum South, as the 37,500 bales of cotton shipped from Yazoo City in 1839 indicate.¹¹ By 1857 Michael Hooter owned twenty-five slaves, and in 1860 his real estate was valued at \$15,600 and personal property at \$27,670—no small fortune.

¹⁰Biographical information on Michael Hooter was obtained from his descendants, Chancery Court records in Yazoo City, U.S. Census reports, and newspaper files. Harold C. Fisher of Yazoo City, a descendant of Michael Hooter, kindly furnished much information.

¹¹*Yazoo City Whig*, Dec. 17, 1841.

A community-minded man, Michael Hooter was active in political and religious affairs in his part of the county. When the Whigs nominated the frontier hero, William Henry Harrison, to oppose Martin Van Buren, who was popularly blamed for bank failures and depression in the South and West, "Tippecanoe Clubs" sprang up all over the country in support of Harrison for president in the Presidential campaign of 1840. Several "Tippecanoe Clubs" were organized in normally Democratic Mississippi, and Michael Hooter was very active in the club organized in Satartia.¹² In addition, Michael Hooter was a loyal and faithful member of the historic Mount Olivet Methodist church, still in existence in the southwestern part of Yazoo County.¹³ A devout man, he required his household servants and his slaves to attend evening prayer service held at the back door of his house. The brass bell which he used to call his people to worship is now in the possession of Harold C. Fisher of Yazoo City, a descendant.

The Civil War reduced Hooter to near poverty, as it did most Southern planters. At the beginning of the war, he lived in a large brick house called "Hooter's Inn" in Mechanicsburg, and he owned property in Satartia and a plantation nearby. When the Union army moved across the county south towards Vicksburg in June, 1863, Hooter's home was burned as were all other buildings in Mechanicsburg. At the time of his death, about 1865, Hooter was broken in health and almost penniless.¹⁴ According to family tradition, he was buried in the Mechanicsburg cemetery, though no tombstone marks his grave, few people being able to afford markers at the time.¹⁵

¹²The *Yazoo Banner*, Whig weekly, published at Benton, county seat of Yazoo County, carried notices of political meetings throughout 1840 in which Hooter's name appears. On Jan. 5 he was appointed on the Committee of Vigilance of the "Tippecanoe Club" at Satartia. On May 15 he was appointed to a committee for nominating officers for the Club. On June 5 he was present for a Club meeting, and on Aug. 7 he was a member of the "Central Tippecanoe Club." At the public meeting of Whigs called at the death of President Harrison, Hooter was on the Committee of Correspondence.

¹³J. B. Cain, *Methodism in the Mississippi Conference* (Jackson, 1939), p. 73, states that Michael Hooter was one of the trustees to whom a deed was made July 5, 1851, for property for a new church. Michael's brother, James, was also one of the trustees.

¹⁴Family tradition records an instance of Hooter's deep sense of obligation. During the war he co-signed a note with a minister friend who soon thereafter fled the country. Hooter struggled to prevent foreclosure on the note but was unable to do so. At his death he instructed his children to sell enough of his property to pay the debt which was not his in the first place.

¹⁵Sally Hooter, the daughter mentioned in the tales, built a house in Mechanicsburg about 1866 which is still occupied by her descendants.

The story of Michael Hooter in family tradition and official records is cryptic and sober. These preserve only the bones of the man, devoid of his personality, and they make no hero of him. It took two young men with imagination and a sense of humor to do that. Both William C. Hall¹⁶ and Henry Clay Lewis¹⁷ grew up in Yazoo County, where Mike Hooter, an older man, was a well known character by the time they began writing humorous sketches similar to those appearing weekly in the *Spirit of the Times*.¹⁸ Since these sketches emphasized unique local scenes and characters, Hal and Lewis quite naturally turned to Mike Hooter whose eccentricities lent themselves to humorous treatment.

Mike Hooter of the legend is essentially the creation of Hall, for Mike is the central character of Hall's "Yazoo Sketches,"¹⁹ the first of which was printed in the New Orleans *Delta* in October, 1849.²⁰ In this short, humorous sketch, "Mike Hooter's Fight with the 'Bar,'"

¹⁶Biographical information on Hall is meager. He was born in Yazoo County about 1819, son of John B. Hall, early settler, formerly of Nashville. He supposedly attended Transylvania University and then became a journalist in New Orleans. He died in Yazoo County about 1865. I am indebted to Mrs. T. C. Guion, Phoenix, Miss., for this information about her ancestor.

¹⁷Born in 1825 in Charleston, S. C., Henry Lewis came to Yazoo City about 1836. He graduated from the Louisville Medical Institute, Louisville, Ky., in 1846 and practiced medicine in northeast Louisiana until his death in 1850. Under the pseudonym "Madison Tensas, M. D.," he published humorous sketches in the *Spirit of the Times* and in his one book, *Odd Leaves from the Life of a Louisiana Swamp Doctor* (1850). See my "Henry Clay Lewis, Alias 'The Louisiana Swamp Doctor,' *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, XLIII (Jan., 1955), 58-73.

I am now writing a biography of Dr. Lewis.

¹⁸Many of these sketches were contributed from Mississippi. Among Mississippi contributors to the *Spirit* are "Obadiah Oilstone" (Phillip B. January), "The Turkey Runner" (Gov. A. G. McNutt), "Falconbridge" (Jonathan Falconbridge Kelley), in addition to the unidentified "Azul," "The Man in the Swamp," "Yazoo," "Kurnell Shingle Splitter," and "Curnill Jenks."

¹⁹Identification of Hall as the author of these sketches is based on Judge Robert Bowman's "Yazoo County's Contribution to Mississippi Literature," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, X (1909), 301-303, and on a letter written by Mary Bonney Fields, niece of Hall, published in the *Yazoo Sentinel*, Yazoo City, Jan. 20, 1926, and reprinted in the *Yazoo City Herald*, Aug. 7, 1952. Chittick in *Ring-Tailed Roarers*, p. 307, states that W. E. Burton named Hall as the author in the *Cyclopedia of Wit and Humor*, and speculates that Hall "is quite possibly" the author of all the "Yazoo" sketches.

²⁰The *Delta*, a Democratic organ, was started by Denis Corcoran in 1845 as a rival of George W. Kendall's famous *Picayune*. The *Delta* staff split in 1849 and the *Daily True Delta* was established. Hall's sketches appeared in the *True Delta* and the *Weekly Delta* over the signature "H." or "Printer's Devil." Some were unsigned.

Hall selected Hooter's outstanding character traits, which were developed more fully in four succeeding sketches. Hall emphasized Mike's passion for bear hunting and skillfully allowed that to conflict with his equally ardent religious convictions. Inside a brief introductory framework, Hall wisely lets Mike "tell his story his own way, and in his peculiar vernacular," thereby characterizing Mike more clearly than objective description might have done and at the same time producing a rapidly moving narrative suggestive of the oral tale. Mike dramatizes his encounter with the bear and leads up to the climax but cleverly withholds the resolution until a listener finally draws it out of him. The dialect, rhythm, and structure of the sketch suggests the oral tale as it might be told by a raconteur, the setting and characters are realistic,²¹ and the framework and delayed climax enhance the dramatic effect.

"Mike Hooter's Bar Story," second of the Yazoo Sketches,²² is superior to the first structurally, for it is told entirely in Mike's amusing —dialect. The tale describes Ike Hamblin's embarrassment when a bear stole his gun, removed the flint, and casually walked away while Ike snapped at him. In addition to further characterizing Mike, the tale introduces some of Mike's neighbors, and it exaggerates the native intelligence of Yazoo bears so that the story has a fantastic element characteristic of the tall tale. "Mike Hooter's Fight with the Panther,"²³ third of the series, is much longer than the first two tales, and though the digressions about steam doctors and country courting are typical of the oral tale, the story lacks the direct impact of the first "Yazoo" sketch. On the other hand, the tale further develops Mike's eccentricities, his boasting, drinking, and belligerence.

The fourth sketch in the series, "How Sally Hooter Got Snake-Bit,"²⁴ develops Mike's religious biases, introduces more fully members of his family, and graphically presents a backwoods camp meeting.

²¹U.S. Census reports for 1840 and 1850 list most of Mike Hooter's neighbors who appear under their own names in the "Yazoo Sketches," including John Potter, Samuel Dilley, Archibald Coody (Coony in the tales), Moses Hamblin, and Dr. C. D. Bonney.

²²*Delta*, Jan. 6, 1850.

²³*Ibid.*, Feb. 17, 1850. The editor wrote the day before, "Our paper of Sunday will contain a great amount of valuable, interesting and varied matter. Among other original articles, there will be an excellent Panther Story, by our popular sketch writer."

²⁴*Ibid.*, March 25, 1850.

Though the tale is told in Mike's words, his daughter, Sally,²⁵ who is as obstinate as her father, shares the action which centers around her attempt to be fashionably dressed at the camp meeting. In Mike's words:

. . . you see the wimmin folks 'bout where I lives, is h-ll fur new fashions, an' one day one uv them ar all-fired yankee pedlars come er long with er outlandish kind uv er jigamaree to make the wimmin's coat sorter stick out in the 'tother eend, an' the she's, they all put on one, case they 'sposed the he's would love to see it. Well, my Sal, she got monsous stuck up 'bout it, an' axed me to give her one; but I told her she had no more use for one, nor er settin' hen had for a midwife, an' I wouldn't do no such er thing, case how she was big enough thar at first.²⁶

Sally was not to be foiled by an obstinate father, however; she took the large sausage her mother had prepared for Parson James and laced it around her waist for a bustle. She was in the height of fashion until religious fervor led to dancing which caused the sausage to come loose and fall about her ankles. Sally mistook the sausage for a snake, but her indomitable father saved her from the "serpent."²⁷ Although this tale has been one of the most popular of the sketches, it is actually less well constructed than the first of the series.

The fifth and last of Hall's "Yazoo Sketches," "How Mike Hooter Came Very Near 'Wolloping' Arch Coony," develops further Mike's love of boasting, his religious zeal, and his willingness to fight those who criticized him. The tale is drawn out unnecessarily and lacks the dramatic climax of the first two sketches of the series.

Within five months all of the "Yazoo Sketches" appeared in New Orleans newspapers, and three of them²⁸ were immediately reprinted in the *Spirit of the Times*, the New York weekly which circulated so widely the humorous sketches of Thorpe, Thompson, Baldwin, and others of the Southwestern school of frontier humor. Hall for some reason wrote no more sketches about Mike Hooter. Tradition states that, when Hall returned to Yazoo County on a visit, Hooter threatened him with a beating. Hall retorted that he would retaliate with his pen and was not molested.

²⁵Chittick, *Ring-Tailed Roarers*, p. 307, erroneously calls Sally Mike's sister.

²⁶*Polly Peablossom's Wedding*, p. 71.

²⁷Mrs. Guion states that an old-timer in Yazoo County swears that Sally actually wore the sausage bustle.

²⁸"Mike Hooter's Bar Story," Jan. 26, 1850; "Mike Hooter's Fight with the Panther," March 9, 1850; and "How Sally Hooter Got Snake-Bit," April 13, 1850.

Although Henry Clay Lewis wrote only one sketch that is associated with the Mike Hooter legend, he contributed an element of fantasy to the cycle of tales. Lewis's "The Indefatigable Bear-Hunter," appeared in his book of humorous sketches in 1850²⁹ and was reprinted in the *Spirit of the Times* shortly thereafter.³⁰ "Mik-hoo-tah," allegedly an Indian name meaning "the grave of bears," is the central character of the sketch. Since Lewis, unlike Hall, used fictitious names in all his sketches, his "Mik-hoo-tah" is obviously Mike Hooter whom he had known when he lived in Yazoo County. Though the locale of Lewis's sketch is the swamps of northeast Louisiana where he was practicing medicine at the time it was written, the hunting tactics, dialect, and boasting show that he almost certainly had Michael Hooter in mind. Mik, child of the woods and of unknown parentage, had earned his Indian name because of his slaughter of bears. His ambition was to be called *the* "bear-hunter of Ameriky." So great was his prowess that the "Big Bear of Arkansas" would "not have given him an hour's extra work," and at the sound of his horn, the bears drew lots to see which one would die that day. Though the Swamp Doctor had to amputate with a bowie knife Mik's leg which a bear had mangled in a fight, Mik went on to even greater glory when he killed another bear in close combat with splinters of the wooden leg which the Doctor had made for him. Lewis lets Mik tell the tale in his own dialect, and Mik's use of exaggeration and fantasy give the story the tall tale flavor of heroic adventures of Mike Fink and Davy Crockett.

In selecting an actual man as the basis for their humorous sketches, Hall and Lewis were following a well established tradition in frontier humor.³¹ Furthermore, oral tales about Mike Hooter's exploits were current, some of them still being told in Yazoo County. As Arthur P. Hudson has said of the frontier writers, "... they had the wit to realize

²⁹*Odd Leaves from the Life of a Louisiana Swamp Doctor*, pp. 164-175.

³⁰XX (April 20, 1850), 9. Lewis had previously published four sketches in the *Spirit*: "Cupping on the Sternum; Or, A Leaf from the Life of a Medical Student," XV (Aug. 16, 1845), 25; "A Tight Race Considerin'," XVI (Nov. 28, 1846), 40; "A Leaf from the Life a 'Swamp Doctor,'" XVII (May 29, 1847), 14 [reprinted in his book as "Valerian and the Panther"]; and "Winding up a Mississippi Bank," XVII (Oct. 2, 1847), 2.

³¹Most of the major Southwestern humorists maintained that they were writing about real people and actual conditions. See, for example, A. B. Longstreet's preface to *Georgia Scenes* (New York, 1840), p. iv, and W. T. Thompson's "To the Reader," *Major Jones's Courtship* (Philadelphia, 1879), pp. 5-7. William T. Porter expresses the same conviction in his preface to *The Big Bear of Arkansas, and Other Sketches* (Philadelphia, 1858), pp. viii-xii.

that something old in talking might look new in writing."³² Hall and Lewis, therefore, chose Mike's most obvious accentricities, dramatized them, and surrounded him with characteristic actions and attitudes, though some were perhaps not originally his. Such a process almost inevitably leads to the elevation of a purely local character to national prominence.

Mike Hooter was well on his way to such distinction when Hall inexplicably stopped writing about him, and when Lewis died at the early age of twenty-five. As a result, Mike Hooter never attained the sustained popularity of the truly national folk hero. Nevertheless, the myth itself and the process by which it was created illustrate the manner by which such heroes as Davy Crockett, Mike Fink, and Paul Bunyan rose to national fame. Though Mike Hooter was not so destined, he nevertheless remains one of the most intriguing minor figures of the old Southwestern frontier.

³²*Humor of the Old Deep South* (New York, 1936), pp. 16-17.

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RHYMING NAMES IN TENNESSEE

by KELSIE HARDER

IN PERRY COUNTY, a rather isolated area in Middle Tennessee, I collected the rhyming names quoted below. The informant was a resident of Ulster-Scots descent, seventy years of age, who was born in the community. I have been unable to find references to rhyming names in any folklore collection, although, according to my informant, the custom was widespread in the section, especially before 1900. She also said that many other rhymes had been forgotten.

The rhymes appear as they were given to me by the informant. The first one exhibits some vivid frontier description:

Mary, Sary, Kate, 'n Nan
Thankful Lizabeth, Jake, John
Crooked-eyed lizard
Straight-eyed Sam
Ragged Solomon
Injun Tom.

The second rhyme describes a bodily characteristic of a specific person whose first name was Ider:

Ider, Melindy,
My Lu Izy Beth Jane
Little fat possum
Can't run a grain.

The last verse is a variation on "Can't run a step," with "grain" substituted for the sake of rhyme.

The third rhyme, rather plain, is a name-list of the children in one hill family:

Randy 'n Mandy, Jim 'n John
Newt 'n Laney, Mary 'n Nanny
Elmer 'n Merry Anny.

The only explanation that I can give, no means definitive, is that the parents of large families decided that the names of the many children could be remembered more accurately if a name-list rhyme was

composed. Nevertheless, the crude verses resemble metrical lists of names quite common in Old Germanic and Icelandic verse under the technical name of *thulas*. The modern *thula* may be a folk tradition that has survived through the centuries.

In addition, the second rhyme may indicate that many persons found themselves caricatured in verse. The informant stated that school children often persecuted an unfortunate schoolmate by pillorying him in rhyme. No conclusions, however, can be drawn without more specimens of the rhymes.

In Perry County, Tennessee, I collected also the following variant of the "Ring Around a Rosey" rhyme game:

Ring around a rosey,
Bottle full of posey;
Squat little Josey.

The last two verses deviate from the examples in *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, I (Durham, 1952), 150-151. The word "pocket" appears in all other versions in place of "bottle," as above. This substitution has two possible explanations: (1) The similarity in sounds; or (2) a realistic exchange, in that one does not usually carry posies around in pockets—bottles would be more appropriate. All the examples in Brown's collection have a command given for the participants to sit down, but "little Josey" obviously used for rhyme, has no parallel in any printed example that I have found. Furthermore, the variant given here is the only one that has three true rhymes.

The earthy Margery Daw has undergone a bowdlerization from her character in the old nursery rhyme:

See-saw, Margery Daw,
Sold her bed and lay upon straw;
Was not she a dirty slut
To sell her bed and lay upon dirt.¹

Although *Daw* has a dictionary meaning of "a lazy, dirty woman," children who have heard the following version, collected in Perry

¹Opie, Iona and Peter, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford, 1952), p. 297.

County, Tennessee, certainly have not had their ears sullied by "offensive" language used in the nursery:

See saw, see saw, Margery Daw,
Sold her bed to lay her head
Upon a bed of straw.
Was not she a hasty girl
To sell her bed to lay her head
Upon a hard bed of straw?

This rhyme was chanted to me by a resident of the community who remembered the version from her childhood during the 1880's and 1890's. No doubt *hasty* has been substituted for *nasty*. In fact, the whole rhyme has been discreetly amended by someone with a literary aptitude, for it is much smoother than the more common and abrupt version. Also it was probably more befitting for Victorian middle-class taste.²

²See *ibid.*, p. 298, for a quotation of the prevalent Victorian idea recognized and mildly satirized by Kipling: "Kipling quotes Mrs. Buzgago as singing the verse [Margery Daw] in *The Hill of Illusion*. After hearing it Captain Congleton says, 'I'm going to alter that to "flirt." It sounds better.'"

Youngstown College

NEGRO TALES FROM BOLIVAR COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

by
RICHARD M. DORSON

ONLY ONE all-Negro town can be found in Mississippi, Mound Bayou in Bolivar County, whose mayor holds a Harvard law degree. Hearing of Mound Bayou while collecting in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, I decided to return home through northern Mississippi, and visit this unusual community. On a scorching day in the summer's heat, July the first, 1953, I drove through the endless cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta, where clusters of straw-hatted Negroes chopped away at the weeds endangering the green plants—and swapped tales as they worked—until I reached the little town on the highway where eight hundred Negroes and no whites resided. For the night I had to return a few miles to Cleveland, and put up at a shabby hotel. A nineteen-year-old Negro bellhop took my suitcase into the elevator, and before we had reached the fifth floor Archie "Billy Jack" Tyler had told me two folktales, and agreed to accompany me to Mound Bayou the next morning. Bright and quick, an enthusiastic talker when he had the floor, but subdued and passive among his elders, Billy Jack proved a fine companion, and a far better informant than any I met in my short visit to Mound Bayou.

Born in Cleveland, February 10, 1934, Billy Jack gets his name from a black billy goat in the yard the day of his birth. As a matter of course he chopped and picked cotton in the fields, where he heard many stories. "They tell them in different arrangements." For three years he worked in cafés and restaurants in Greenville, doing "commercial cooking." For another three years (1948-1951), he worked for a "hoodoo" in Cleveland, Dr. Toby George. "He sent me to the drug-store for Blue Seal vaseline, Sweet Spirits of Nitrate, and Epsom Salts, in large green bottles. Then he'd have me get five gallons of gasoline, for rubbing compound." Women would come to Dr. George foaming at the mouth, and he would heal them, and find their missing husbands, "just like he was an information bureau." He had studied at Algine, across from New Orleans, with Aunt Carolyn Dye, the famous fortune-teller. Next Billy Jack had come to the hotel, and now within the week he would join the Navy.

The following day we prospected in Mound Bayou, calling on the mayor, knocking on doors, and hanging around the stores. When I drove back to an air-conditioned restaurant in Cleveland for lunch, and revival, I left Billy Jack with a notebook and pencil, and on my return he had collected two full texts of European animal tales, and located a good hangout, the barbershop. There "jackleg" preachers—licensed to preach but lacking a church—sat around, none more impressively than the Reverend J. H. Lee. Ancient, portly, heavy-jowled, his voice thick and rumbly with age, he read a passage to me from the Seventh Book of Moses, the so-called Black Bible, which he carried in his pocket. "You take an egg, handle it a thousand times, write certain Scriptures from the psalm of David on it, work it down to the size of a pea and swallow it, and then you can remember anything, and cure people." Then he matched tales with Billy Jack. Watching the septuagenarian and the stripling exchange variants, I appreciated the tenacity of Southern Negro folk tradition, that embraces the aged and the young with so firm a hold.

The paralyzing heat flushed me out of Cleveland and Mound Bayou within twenty-four hours, but not until I had garnered the following mementoes.

1. Brer Rabbit an' Brer Fox¹

Brer Rabbit had been working hard digging in his carrot garden. While he was digging, a thought hit him. Why should he eat dry carrots when he could eat fish with them? So he decided he would go fishing in the old swimming hole. So he thought that he could set a net out in the pond and catch enough fish to last him a year. So he left home with his pole so he could fool Brer Fox. It was about three o'clock in the morning and it was very cold when the Rabbit put his net in the water. The Fox had seen him when he passed his house with his pole. That evening about one o'clock Brer Fox seen Brer Rabbit with a string of fish large as he was, and he asked the Rabbit, what do you have to do. So Brer Rabbit said, "Hold your feet in a whole bucket of water and your pole in the lake and be sure to go at twelve

¹This and the following tale were collected by Billy Jack Tyler in the barbershop while I was having lunch. This is a variation of Type 2 in Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folk-Tale* (Helsinki, 1928), "The Tail-Fisher," and Motif K1021 in Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington, Ind., 1932-6). Prof. Thompson refers to Kaarle Krohn's study demonstrating the thousand year old life of the tale, in *The Folktale* (New York, 1936), 119-120.

o'clock at night, when you hold onto the line with all your might." So that night about twelve o'clock Brer Fox went fishing, and it was very cold but he carried a whole bucket of water and his fishing pole. Not knowing that Brer Rabbit was playing a trick on him, Brer Fox went to sleep with his feet in the cold ice water and when he woke up he had a bite and never noticed that his bucket full of water froze around his feet and a big fish was pulling him into the lake and Brer Rabbit was laughing his head clean off.¹

2. Tapin and the Deer

The Tapin [Terrapin] and Deer was racing to see a girl and the Tapin was playing sly fox. He had a Tapin stationed at every station. Every station the Deer would come to, the Tapin would call out loud, "Hello, Brother Deer!", and the Deer would break out and run. When he got to Number 2 station another Tapin called out, "Hello, Brother Deer!" And when the Deer got to the third and final station, the Tapin was sitting there with his legs crossed. And the Deer asked him how did he run so fast with that shell on his back. And he told him that was his own secret. And the Deer got mad and trampled his hide to pieces. So from that day to this one, the Deer has always hated the Tapin.²

3. Alligator Finds Trouble (Rev. J. H. Lee)

The Alligator told the Rabbit that he had never seen no trouble. He told the Alligator, that "If you go in that sagefield, I'll show you trouble." Well, the Alligator went out in the sagefield, and the Rabbit went all the way around the sagefield, and set it on fire. Then as the fire begin to burn and burn and burn and burn he told the Rabbit,

"Trouble-trouble" (*deep*)

The fire and the smoke was giving him the devil. But he was lucky enough not to get burned up. But he seen trouble. "How you feeling, Brother Alligator?" "I'm feeling very miserable." He said, "That's what you call trouble."³

¹Type 1074, "Race," and Motif K11.1, "Race won by deception: relative helpers." For bibliography see Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-Lore of the Antilles, French and English*, Part III, *Memoirs of the American Folklore Society* XXVI (1943), 78-79, no. 50, "Relay Race."

²See *South Carolina Folk Tales*, compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina (Col-

4. High-flying Buzzard
(Mrs. I. E. Edwards)⁴

(Our grandmother told us this when she wanted to explain to us how to be kind.)

The buzzard would fly high, higher than the average bird, with the exception of the eagle. He can sail so smoothly, above the wind, at perfect ease. And he was above all other birds. But with all of his smooth sailing, and regardless of how high he could fly, he could never get a morsel of food up there, but he would have to come down to earth to get his food.

From that she would tell us, regardless of what you might have, don't ever forget to be kind, because we all have to live on the same level. That's where his living and his food come from.

5. The Convention
(Rev. J. H. Lee)

One time they had a convention, and all the rabbits and dogs and foxes was invited to the convention. And the Rabbit walked in and passed by the old Hound. And the Hound gapped on him, went,

"Yowwww."

The Rabbit said, "You'd better muzzle this son of a b——. He'll bite somebody directly."⁵

6. Preacher and Fowls
(Rev. J. H. Lee)

The Rooster said,

"Isn't that preacher go-o-ne?"

The Guinea said,

"Not yet. Not yet. Not yet."

The old Drake said, when he seed the preacher coming,

umbia, S. C., 1941), 3-4, for a text and seven Southern Negro references.

Rev. J. H. Lee was born in Wilcox, Alabama. He claimed to be close to a hundred, and was at least 70. He preaches for the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

⁴Mrs. I. E. Edwards was born in Pickens, Holmes County, Mississippi, in 1903. Her grandmother and aunt were slaves.

⁵Four days later, on July 6, 1953, Walter Winfrey of Inkster, outside Detroit, Michigan, gave me a variant. Motif A2494.4.4, "Enmity of rabbit and dog," gives no American Negro references.

"Run, run, run, run, run." (That's the password. And everybody leave.)

The old Hen said,

"Good god, good God *look out*."

The old Turkey Gobbler said,

"Why'n the hell don't you hush your fuss?"

The old Goose said,

"Keep qui-e-t. Keep qui-e-t."⁶

7. Old Master Catcher Thieves

(Bill Baker)

(My grandfather told this from slavery times, he said it was a fact.)

Old Mahster had a smokehouse full of meat, and the houseboy would lock up. And he would go and push a piece of meat through the crack. And when he'd lock up to leave he'd stick his hand in the crack and pull it out. Eventually Old Mahster went to missing his meat. And one evening Old Mahster shut hisself up in the smokehouse in a box, with a sharp hatchet. When Bill reached at the meat, Old Mahster cut one hand off. And Bill stuck the other un in there. And Mahster cut that un off. Bill had a friend with him named Jim. And Bill called Jim, and told him to run his hand in there and get the meat. And Mahster cut Jim's hand off. And Jim begin hollering. Bill say, "Hush don't holler, both mine cut off and I ain't hollering."⁷

8. John Whips Old Master

(Billy Jack Tyler)

Old Master send John down to the barn to harness up the mules. And John went down to the barn, started to feeding the cows and the mules. And he stayed so long Old Master came to see what he was doing. And when he got there he axed John why he was so long about

⁶I collected nine texts in Michigan and one in Arkansas of this favorite. Ernest W. Baughman gives only one reference under the Motif X459.2*(b), "Fowls hide when preacher comes to visit," in his *A. Comparative Study of the Folktales of England and North America* (3 vols.: Indiana University doctoral dissertation, 1953).

⁷Again a close variant, and my only one, was told me after I drove straight north from Mississippi to Michigan, and on July 6 visited Walter Winfrey, an Arkansas-born Negro living in Inkster. In his post-bellum text, the thieves are WPA workers, whose hands are cut off by a farmer.

Bill Baker was born in Emmet County, Mississippi, in 1882, and has lived in Mound Bayou since 1912.

bringing the mules up to the house. John say he was cold and he just thought he would rest. And he told him, says, "I told you to hitch up the mules so we could harness them to the wagon and go get some firewood." John told him it was too cold to do anything at the present time. Old Master told John, "Don't be so sassy old nigger, because if I had my pistol I would blow your brains out." John said, "Oh Master, you don't have your pistol? I'm going whip you this morning."

(John wanted to stay in the barn where it was warm.)⁸

9. Will Henry and the Deer

(Billy Jack Tyler)

This was back in slavery. Will Henry was working for an old man by the name of Silas Marner. And to be sure that he wouldn't get away or anything he kept him in ball and chain. And Will Henry had got up that morning about five o'clock and harnessed up his mules and got in the field, begin plowing. And about twelve o'clock Old Master came out to the field. He had about twenty acres to plow. And he hadn't plowed but three acres out of the whole twenty in seven hours. Old Master axed him what he had been doing, and he told him, he had been plowing hard. And he began looking up at the sun to see how it was in the sky. Old Master as usual had his bull whip on his side. He drew his bull whip from his side and popped him. And Will Henry was still looking at the sky when he popped him, kneeled down on his knees. Old Master popped him again. That time the whip caught in the ball and chain. Will Henry snatched the whip and popped Old Master side the head. Old Master lay there as if he was dead. Will Henry thinking that he had killed Old Master jumped up and run.

After Will Henry had been running about four hours, he heard a shot and heard some hound dogs. And he thought sure was a posse on his trail. And he ran on still faster. After he had been running two days, he ran into a deer. He and the deer ran neck and neck for two more days. The third day he and the deer stopped still in their tracks. He said to the deer, "Mr. Deer, you must have killed one too."⁹

⁸An analogue was told me by Jeff Alexander in Benton Harbor, Michigan, "Old Marster Eats Crow," where the slave on retrieving his gun from Old Marster compels him to finish eating the crow Marster had made him eat. A similar folktale exists in Jewish tradition, where a messenger held up by a bandit asks the robber to fire bullets into his cap and coat, as proof of the attack; when the robber has emptied his gun the messenger overpowers him. See William Grossman, *Jewish Humor* (2nd printing, p., 1944), 75-76.

⁹J. D. Suggs of Calvin, Michigan, told me of "The Fast Runner" who ends up running abreast of a deer, after slapping a white man in Arkansas.

10. John Doe in Self-Defense
(Billy Jack Tyler)

John Doe he was a rich white man. And he had a orchard out in his back yard, which consisted of eight pear trees. And down the road about half a mile lived a Negro by the name of Sam who had a houseful of hongry kids, and didn't have a way to feed them. And Sam had been watching John Doe's pear orchard. So when the pears got ripe he was going to feed his kids off them. He knew that John Doe wouldn't be at home at night. So he thought he would steal by night rather than by day. The first stealing began on a Monday night. John Doe noticed the next morning three of his trees had been stripped. So that Tuesday night he thought he would wait up in the window to see who was stealing his pears. He had his shotgun sitting right beside of him. When he heard the rustling of the fourth pear tree he didn't take time to see who it was in the tree. He just shot and missed him, and Sam dropped his sack and ran.

John Doe waited up two more nights, that Wednesday and that Thursday night. And that Saturday night about nine o'clock he caught him in the fifth tree and shot him behind. Sam ran all the way to town and told the sheriff. And the sheriff came out and arrested John Doe. And his wife got him out on a twenty-five dollar bail. And the sheriff told him they would have court that Monday morning.

That Monday morning after they had all gathered in the courthouse. John Doe was the first person they called to the stand. The first thing the judge axed him, was he guilty. And he told him he wasn't. Then the judge axed him, did he shoot him in self-defense. He said, "No sir, I didn't." The judge was astonished over the way he was acting. He told the judge, said, "Judge, I would tell you how I shot him but there's too many ladies in the courtroom."

Next they called Sam to the stand and axed him. Sam told the judge, said, "Your honor, I was only stealing for my kids because they were hongry, and he shot me behind." And he turned around and showed him where he shot him. And the judge called John Doe back to the stand again. John Doe said, "Your Honor, I'm not guilty of the crime because I didn't shoot him in self-defense. I shot him behind and he jumped the fence."¹⁰

¹⁰A brief variant from Kentucky is reported by Mary E. Roberts, "Folklore in My Father's Life," *Midwest Folklore*, III (Fall, 1953), 147.

11. Counting Souls

(Billy Jack Tyler)

There was two Negroes was planning on stealing some sweet potatoes. And the patch was next to a cemetery. And at the same time two white boys was planning to rob a grave. They went down there that night and the two colored boys began digging the sweet potatoes and counting them. One colored boy said, "One for you and one for me." When he got his sack full he heard somebody else say, "One for you and one for me." The other colored boy jumped up and looked around and said, "Did you say that?" He said, "No." But the day before they had thought about stealing the sweet potatoes, his mother had told him that when the Lord and the Devil were going to come they were going to count the souls out. And the other boy told him, said, "Wait, don't say anything else and we'll listen." Said, "Maybe the Lord and the Devil has come down to count the souls out." Other white boy jumped up and said, "One for you and two for me." They were counting out jewelry, 'cause a rich old lady had been buried there. Colored boys jumped up then and left the sweet potatoes and started running home.

When they got home both of 'em was panting like yellow horses. And mother asked 'em (in the dialect form): "Chile, what in the Devil is wrong with you-all?" Boy told her, said, "Mama, Robert and I was in Mr. Robinson's field stealing sweet potatoes when the Devil and the Lord came down in that old cemetery." Said, "The Lord started counting souls first. He said, 'One for you and one for me.' The Devil got mad because he didn't say, 'Two for you and three for me,' and hauled off and hit him, and that's the time we lit a shuck."¹¹

12. The Three Preachers

(Bill Baker)

There was a big Baptist state convention. The delegates was so numerous they couldn't hardly take care of all of them. And there was three preachers left didn't have nowhere to stay, a Baptist preacher, a Methodist preacher, and a Presbyterian preacher. The lady told

¹¹Type 1791, "The Devil in the Cemetery," is widely known among American Negroes and whites, and my commonest text from Negroes in Michigan and Arkansas. For a bibliography see the notes by Herbert Halpert, pp. 204-205, to Vance Randolph's text of "Dividing Up the Dead" in *Who Blowed Up the Church House?* (New York, 1952), 83-84.

them she had fixed a room in a nearby house (she didn't tell them it was hanted), and they could take their meals with her.

They came for meeting that night and set down and begin to talk. Eventually the hants commenced to coming in. The Baptist preacher began singing. The more he sing the more the hants came in. The Presbyterian preacher he begin praying. And the more he prayed the more the hants come in. He says to the Methodist preacher, "Now doc, it's your floor." And the Methodist preacher say, "Let's take up a collection," and the hants begin to leave.¹²

13. The Two Deacons (Archie Tyler)

Two deacons hadn't been to church in a long time. They finally went, one kneeled to pray,

"Uuuhhhh" (*droning chant*).

He thought if he tried a second time it would come to him.

"Uuuhhhh."

Then he said, "Funny, as well as I know those two fellows I can't call their names."

The other deacon said, "You mean the Lord and God."¹³

14. What Did John Say? (Mrs. I. E. Edwards)

In slavery times one of the slaves was a handyman around the house. And the preacher sent him to market to get a steak before church. And the man who owned the store was named John. When Sam came back, the preacher had taken his text from St. John. Sam came in and he took his seat in the back as he usually did. And the preacher he was in a high way of preaching.

"What did John say? (*high*).

I say, what did John say?"

¹²In J. Mason Brewer, *The Word on the Brazos* (Austin, Texas, 1953), 64-66, "The Haunted Church and the Sermon on Tithing" uses this theme of the hants departing when the plate is passed.

¹³I recorded on tape a variant of this just from Paul Green, the well known dramatist, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on August 23, 1954.

Sam got up and said, "He say that you don't get another steak till you pay for what you already got."¹⁴

15. Old Lady Who Couldn't See Well

(Rev. J. H. Lee)

Young man was courting an old woman. They were sitting out talking and she called her servant, "What's that shining out there?" "Oh that's a needle." Young man says, "What a wonderful eyesight she has."

The servant got the dinner ready and invited them in. But when she went in for dinner there was a turkey in the platter, and the legs was sticking up, and she says "Scat," and knocked it off the dish.

She had given herself away after all.¹⁵

16. Young Man in the Morning

(Archie Tyler)

Old lady wanted the young man so bad. So another old lady told her, "If you want a young man very bad, stand up on the roof all night and you'll have a young man tomorrow night." Says, "Whenever you hear the winter wind whistling it'll be saying,

"Young man tomorrow night,
Young m-a-n tomorrow night" (*high*).

The woman froze up there on top of the house. And from then on when the wind whistled it say,

"Young m-a-n tomorrow night."¹⁶

¹⁴Type 1833, Motif X435, "The Boy Applies the Sermon." Baughman reports 24 examples of this type, which he ranks among the most popular American tales.

¹⁵Type 1456, "The Blind Fiancée," and Motif K1984.5, "Blind Fiancée betrays self." I have collected variants in Michigan and Arkansas. See Parsons, *Antilles*, Part III, no. 117, p. 114, "The Blind Old Woman;" and Randolph, *Who Blowed Up the Church House?*, 86-87, "The Pin in the Gatepost," and the note by Herbert Halpert on p. 206.

¹⁶Rev. J. H. Lee said the old woman cried, "Cold wet sheet tonight, but young man in the morning." Type 1479*, Motif X753, synopsizes the tale as here given, and report it from Russia, Estonia, and Finland. See Zora N. Hurston, *Mules and Men* (Philadelphia & London, 1935), 216-217, "How the Squinch Owl Came to be;" and Elsie C. Parsons, "Tales from Guilford County, North Carolina," *Journal of American Folklore*, XXX (1917), no. 49, p. 194, "Woman on House-Top." I have collected four variants from Michigan Negroes.

17. Raggedy Old Lady

(Rev. J. H. Lee)

There was an old woman so raggedy she didn't know herself. She said, "Lak-a-mercy, is this me?" She looks at herself, old shoes are tattered and torn, old bonnet all worn, she didn't know herself. She says, "Now if this is me, when my little dog sees me, he will wag his tail."

But instead of doing that the little dog tried to pull up the stob he was tied to, trying to get at her.

She said, "Lak-a-mercy, this is not me."¹⁷

18. Obstinate Man

(Rev. J. H. Lee)

Old man he was so superstitious, he didn't believe nothing. "Oh there ain't nothing to that." The railroad company had bought a right-away in his community, and he said, "No train will never run out here." They started falling the trees, burning up the logs, one thing and another, tearing up the dump, getting everything arranged. He yet wasn't convinced. Finally after awhile here come a crowd of men and they filled up the railroad dump. And then directly they put down the crossties, and rails. Finally after a while they got everything completed; there's the train standing at the roundhouse.

"Pa. There's a train on the track!"

"Aw. It'll never move."

The conductor come out, and give the engineer a highball (that means get on out the way). Then he started to pulling off.

"Whomh, whomh, whomh."

"Pa, the train's coming! Don't ye hear that noise!"

"Aw, it'll never stop!"

And that's right, it's been going ever since.

(Lots of people is just like that, ignorant and superstitious.)

19. Mr. Hard Times

(Billy Jack Tyler)

¹⁷Type 1383 (and Motif J2012.3), "The Woman Does Not Know Herself in tar and feathers. The dog does not recognize her." Baughman refers to one English and two American texts, from Virginia (Negro), and Indiana, but the American tales are based on the humor of drunkenness.

Was an old lady and an old man, and they had been saving money and saving money. And old lady had a nature sack which she kept around her waist, that she kept her money in. They had killed hogs and put up in the smokehouse, lard, flour, meal, and from that they had saved up for hard times. The old man had to go to town, and he told the old lady that they had saved for four years straight, and when hard times did come they would have something for it. And while the old man was going to town, a man came by and axed the old lady, did she have anything she could give him to eat, because he had had a hard time. And the old lady hesitated right quick, and say, "Are you Mr. Hard Times?" And he said, "Yes," because he had been hunting for the place they had been saving for hard times for a long time. She told him to back his wagon up to the smokehouse, and he could load up all the hams and shoulders, lard and flour and sugar that they had saved for Mr. Hard Times. And after they had loaded all this on the wagon, and got about a distance of fifty feet from the house, the old lady called him and said, "Mr. Hard Times, forgot to give you something." And pulled up her dress and got the nature sack out, and give him the money. And when her husband come home, she said, "We don't have to save for Mr. Hard Times any longer, because he have already been here and got everything we saved."

So he killed her.¹⁸

20. Greasing the Baby (Archie Tyler)

There was an old man and an old lady that lived in Arkansas. In the first part of the winter their baby had her first cold and they didn't know what it was. So the old man decided to carry the baby to the doctor. When he got to the doctor's office, the doctor told him wasn't anything wrong with the baby but a chest cold. He told them to take the baby and grease his chest and warm him by the fire. The old man carried the baby back home and told the old lady to grease the baby and warm him by the fire because he had to go back to town, and it would be dark before he could get back. After he had gone, the old lady greased the baby all over and put him in a frying pan. And as the baby began to cook, the skin drew up on his forehead. And

¹⁸Tpue 1541 (and Motif K362.1), "For the Long Winter." See Elsie C. Parsons, *Folk-Lore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina*, *Memoirs of the American Folklore Society* XVI (1923), no. 147, pp. 132-134, "Mr. Hard-Times."

it looked as if he was grinning. And the old lady said, "Grin and endure it, child, grin and endure it." By that time the old man had made it home, and he axed the old lady, how was the baby getting along. She said, "You will be surprised to see how he is grinning in that frying pan in the stove." And the old man repeated what she said: "Grin and endure it, child, grin and endure it."¹⁹

¹⁹In a tale from St. Martin in the West Indies, a sick man, told by the doctor to place a plaster on his chest to relieve his cold, places it on his trunk (Parsons, *Antilles*, Part III, no. 16, p. 410, "Trunk"). Motif J2465, "Disastrous following of instructions," is indicated here.

Michigan State University

FOLK MOTIFS IN OLD SOUTHWESTERN HUMOR

by JAMES H. PENROD

ALTHOUGH he rendered an invaluable service in reacquainting the literary world with the Old Southwestern yarnspinners, Franklin J. Meine tended in his laudable zeal to exaggerate the originality and indigenous quality of Southwestern humor. In his words: "This early humor of the South had no counterpart in the humor of any other section of the United States. It was distinctly and peculiarly Southern; and it was provincial, wholly local."¹ Students of the folk-tale can hardly fail to see the Southwestern yarns as part of a larger whole, the folklore of the world. This is not to say that Old Southwestern humor is lacking in local color, specific details, or individualized characters. The worth of the yarns is enhanced, not lessened, by the reflection that the authors of these tales excelled in delineating not only the particular but also the universal, as all great folk raconteurs have done. Thus, while portraying vividly and accurately the life of the Southern backwoods in the generation before the Civil War, the Southwestern yarnspinners often produced convincing evidence of the familiar bromides that there is nothing new under the sun and that we are all brothers under the skin.²

The purpose of this article is to indicate the close relationship between the broad motifs of Old Southwestern humor and those established as universal by Stith Thompson. Since a full treatment is impossible in so brief an article as this, I shall confine the discussion to the following categories: origin of the colored race, speaking animals, giant animals, and remarkable persons.

According to Biblical tradition (but not the Good Book itself), Father Noah began the colored race when he placed a curse on his son Ham for his lack of filial piety. Others have regarded Cain as the first Negro because of the mark placed on him by God. Such explanations of the origin of race are the white man's versions; other peoples offer different accounts. Thus, in the folklore of the North American

¹Franklin J. Meine, *Tall Tales of the Southwest, 1830-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), p. xvi.

²Russell Blankenship has wisely pointed out that American humorists — like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Fielding, Hardy, and other classic writers — have made literary capital of their knowledge of the broad humor current among the lower classes in their generations and nations. (*American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931, p. 450).

Indians, the natives of the Caribbean region, and the American Negro, the various races became dark-skinned from bathing after the white men. One member of the original fair-skinned race was followed into the river by the Spaniard, then by the Indian, and finally by the Negro—each becoming darker because of the condition of the water. This explanation appears in one of the tales of Uncle Remus, American literature's most popular spinner of folk yarns.

Similarly, the native of New Britain believed that light and dark-skinned peoples were made from light and dark coconuts. Certain African natives, however, explain their color by the fact that their ancestors became black from eating the livers of oxen, whereas the red men acquired their color from eating the lungs and blood.³

Almost a century ago the North Carolina-born Baptist preacher, Harden E. Taliaferro, transcribed a version of the Cain-Abel story recounted by a colored preacher of his acquaintance which illustrates the Negro's adaptation of the white men's account of the origin of races. According to this parson, "Adam, Cain, Abel, Seth, was all of um black as jet." It was only when the Lord demanded of Cain, "Whar is dy brudder Abel?" that the murderer's face blanched and started the white race then and there. As Reverend Gentry said: "De mark de Lord put on de face of Cain was a white mark."⁴ The outcropping of another variation on a universal theme in the work of Taliaferro illustrates the correspondence in motifs between the yarns of the Old Southwestern humorists and the great body of folktales of the world.

Every culture has its heroes and demigods; probably all of them have, more particularly, animals as culture heroes. Thus dogs, rabbits, coyotes, blue jays, mink, ravens, and spiders, among others, appear as heroes in Indian, Aztec, and African lore. Thus also in literature are to be found Aesop's animal fables, Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowls," the Reynard cycle, la Fontaine's witty animal fables, and the rabbit-fox cycle, of which the Uncle Remus stories are the best known examples. Traditionally the tales of humanized animals have been man-centered; that is, they generally point morals and play up human foibles rather than delineate animal life or nature. The true folk tale raconteur is closer to being a humanist than a naturalist.

³Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, I (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press), 176-178.

⁴Harden E. Taliaferro, "Reverend Charles Gentry," *Fisher's River Scenes and Characters* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1859), p. 172.

The Southwestern yarnspinnners told no yarns exclusively about animals; it was on the eternal contest between man and beast that they focused their spotlight. Tall hunting and fishing yarns are a commonplace of American humor. Yet almost invariably the best of these rely heavily on humanized animals as an important source of the humor. The most familiar examples in American humor would be Mark Twain's "The Celebrated Jumping Frog" and "The Blue Jay Yarn." In one of the classic Davy Crockett yarns, the king of the hunters and braggarts told of a meeting with a raccoon which illustrated not only his peerless ability as a marksman but also his renown among the unfortunate animals who lived within hunting distance of the frontier Nimrod. The Colonel had taken dead aim on the treed raccoon when that animal started the following conversation:

"Is your name Crockett?"

Sez I, "You are rite for wonst, my name is Davy Crockett."

"Then," sez he, "you needn't take no further trouble, for I may as well come down without another word." And the cretur walked rite down from the tree, for he considered himself shot.⁵

Again in T. B. Thorpe's famous yarn, "The Big Bear of Arkansas," the humor stems largely from the fantastic mental aspect of the struggle between man and beast. After one unsuccessful foray, the hero of this story, Jim Doggett, "went home that night and took to my bed—the thing was killing me."⁶ Apparently the bear felt the strain fully as much, for in the end he climbed slowly over the hunter's fence in full view, meeting his fate resignedly. As Jim said:

There is something currious about it, I could never understand, and I never was satisfied at his giving in *so easy at last*.

Perhaps he had heard of my preparations to hunt him the next day, so he jist come in, like Capt. Scott's coon, to save his wind to grunt with in dying; but that ain't likely. My private opinion is that bar was an *unhunnable bar, and died when his time come*.⁷

H. C. Lewis (Madison Tensas) capitalized on the same humanizing of a bear in "The Indefatigable Bear Hunter," in which the old

⁵Anonymous, "A Sensible Varmint," *The Literature of the United States*, ed. Blair, Hornberger, and Stewart, II (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1947), 321-322.

⁶Thomas Bangs Thorpe, "The Bib Bear of Arkansas," *The Big Bear of Arkansas, and Other Tales*, ed. W. T. Porter (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1845), p. 29.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 31.

one-legged hunter Mik-hoo-tah described his meeting with another formidable beast:

The bar 'peered s'prised to see me standin' ready for him in the openin', for it was currently reported 'mong his brethren that I was either dead, or no use for bar. I thought fust he was skeered; and, Doc, I b'lieve he war till he catch a sight of my wooden leg, and that tech his pride, for he knew he would be hist outen every she-bear's company, ef he run from a poor, sickly, one-legged cripple.⁸

Another prominent Southwestern yarnspinner, John S. Robb, obviously imitated Thorpe (and perhaps Madison Tensas also) in his "Fun with a Bar." In this story Dan Elkhorn of Missouri treed a formidable bear, only to find him dead, and commented wryly:

As if he had reasoned on the chances, the varmint came to the conclusion that he couldn't git away, and so got up into a crotch of a low tree . . . I went to him and found he'd ben dead for an hour. My little blade couldn't a killed him, so it's my opinion, clearly entertained, that the owdacious varmint, knowin' I'd kill him for his trick, jist climbed up thar whar I could easy find him, and died to spite me!

The mind of man has always been fond of creating mythical beasts, nearly always enormous in size and often possessing fantastic appendages. Indian lore has its giant cows, sheep, bulls, and boars; the Persians have their giant oxen; other people have giant hogs, goats, elephants, tigers, panthers, hippos, fish, reptiles, and insects. In many cases terrifying animals have been described by non-believers to credulous listeners either to scare the daylighters out of them or to impress them with the prowess and courage of the storyteller. The American backwoods has always had its share of such believers and non-believers, of artistic liars and their wide-eyed auditors.

In Old Southwestern humor, Harden Taliaferro, a native of the Blue Ridge section of North Carolina, filled his page with tales of fanciful, fearsome beasts. For example, Uncle Davy Lane, a liar of no mean ability, told of an encounter with a snake which had a "head big as a sasser," a forked tongue, and a six-inch stinger in his tail. This creature rolled down the mountain like a hoop after Davy until his

⁸Henry Clay Lewis, "The Indefatigable Bear Hunter," *Odd Leaves from the Life of a Louisiana Swamp Doctor* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1843), p. 173.

⁹John S. Robb, "Fun with a Bar," *Streaks of Squatter Life* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846), pp. 111-112.

stinger got "stuv up" in a tree, whereupon the hunter shot him.¹⁰ Uncle Davy also told of a ninety-foot tapeworm which was extracted from the gullet of gluttonous Sallie Pettigrew, and of a fifteen-foot snake with horns as big as an antelope. Taliaferro's Oliver Stanley told of being swallowed by a whale in the manner of Jonah.¹¹ A glibble would-be preacher in another Taliaferro yarn preached a sermon on a flying snake which was twelve feet long and had a twelve-inch stinger in its tail.¹² Pranksters had led him on. No doubt some of the Blue Ridge folk whom Taliaferro knew sincerely believed in the existence of such fantastic animals.

Perhaps every known culture has its folktales about remarkable persons. These characters may be exceptionally large or small men: giants, giantesses, and dwarfs. Frequently they are monsters, some of whom have two or three heads or carry their heads under their arms; others may have many eyes, or one eye. Some may have many arms or no feet; others may have wings. A third remarkable type of folk hero is the person with one extraordinary power, such as strength, enormous capacity for food or drink, extraordinary perception, or skilled marksmanship. All three of these types were prominent in Old Southwestern humor.

Giants who wade oceans can be found in Welsh, Norwegian, German, and Greek mythology. The supermen of the Old Southwest did much the same thing. One recalls at this point Davy Crockett's famous boast: "I can wade the Mississippi, leap the Ohio, and ride upon a streak of lightning."¹³ In another Crockett yarn Davy fell in love with a giantess who "could wade the Mississippi without wetting herself."¹⁴ Mike Fink was endowed with a mythical daughter Sal, who had "fought a duel once with a thunderbolt, an' came off without a single scratch, while at the first fire she split the thunderbolt all to flinders . . . She used to ride down the river on an alligator's back, standen upright, an' dancing Yankee Doodle, and could leave all the steamers behind."¹⁵

¹⁰Taliaferro, "Uncle Davy Lane," *op. cit.*, pp. 55-58.

¹¹Taliaferro, "Oliver Stanley," *ibid.*, p. 133.

¹²Taliaferro, "Uncle Billy Lewis," *ibid.*, pp. 162-164.

¹³Anonymous, *Sketches and Eccentricities of Colonel David Crockett of West Tennessee* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1833), p. 164.

¹⁴Anonymous, "A Pretty Predicament," *Ring-Trailed Roarers*, ed. V. L. O. Chittick (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1941), pp. 33-34.

¹⁵Anonymous, "Sal Fink, The Mississippi Screamer," *Native American Humor*, ed. Walter Blair (New York: American Book Company, 1937), p. 284.

The monstrous humans in the Old Southwestern yarns were seldom mythical beings. Most of them were burlesques or caricatures of actual types, arising from that same romantic fondness for grotesquerie that produced, for instance, Hugo's Quasimodo. "Madison Tensas" told of a monstrous Negro dwarf who was sent by his sick master to bring the "swamp doctor," Tensas, to his bedside. The messenger was described in this fashion:

He was a Negro dwarf of the most frightful appearance; his diminutive body was garnished with legs and arms of enormously disproportionate length; his face was hideous; a pair of tusks projected from either side of a double hare-lip; and taking him altogether, he was the nearest resemblance to the orangoutang mixed with the devil that human eyes dwelt upon.¹⁶

This monstrous creature later nearly strangled the doctor, who had refused to give him more whisky, before perishing in the flames of a campfire. Such distorted representations of the Negro, it should be emphasized, were not the usual thing in the work of the yarnspinners.

Two of the most popular grotesque character types in the Old Southwestern yarns were the dirt-eaters and the ugly men: the former immortalized in A. B. Longstreet's Ransy Sniffle in "The Fight," the latter in Johnson J. Hooper's "A Night at the Ugly Man's." Longstreet reproduced the character of Ransy in the person of Mealy Whitecotton in "The Shooting Match." The mischievous boy called Yellow-legs heckled Hooper's Simon Suggs repeatedly. He was described by the author as "a yellow-faced, spindle legged young man," and his identification with the dirt-eaters was definitely established by Simon's taunt: "I'll kick more clay outen you in a minute, than you can eat again in a month, you durn'd little, dirt-eatin' deer-face."¹⁷ Hooper later wrote a sketch about another member of this species, young Coats, in "The Dirtiken." Apparently both he and Longstreet were totally unaware that dirt-eating is characteristic of peoples in warm climates who have the hookworm disease.¹⁸

Hooper adapted the popular backwoods custom of bragging about one's ugliness to his own purposes in describing Bill Wallis, the hideous inhabitant of "Turpingtine" whose ugliness had once won for him not

¹⁶Lewis, "A Struggle for Life," *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

¹⁷Johnson J. Hooper, *Simon Suggs' Adventures* (Americus, Georgia: Americus Book Company, 1928), p. 65.

¹⁸John Donald Wade, *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 174.

just one buckhorn handled knife; a "level peck" had been showered upon him by an awe-stricken crowd in Mobile.¹⁹ Ugly Bill proudly hailed himself as the *nonpareil* of "ugly men":

They call me ugly, Squire, and I am; my father was before me the ugliest man that ever lived in Hancock County . . . It's no use argyfyin the matter—I *am* the ugliest man now on top of dirt. Thar's narry nuther like me! I'm a crowd by myself *I allus was*. The fust I know'd of it, tho was when I was 'bout ten years old. I went down to the spring branch one mornin' to wash my face, and I looked in the water, I see the shadder of my face. Great God! how I run back, hollerin' for mammy ever jump! That's the last time I seen my face—I darsen't but shet my eyes when I go 'bout water.²⁰

According to tradition Longstreet himself was notoriously ugly, but it is possible that his homeliness was greatly exaggerated as he became something of a folk hero. An earlier example of the ugly man than Hooper's Bill Wallis appeared in C. F. M. Noland's "A Quarter Race in Kentucky" as judge of the big race. Again the folklore of the knife was injected:

He was said to be the undisputed possessor of the celebrated jack-knife; his likeness [sic] had been moulded on dog-irons to frighten the children from going too near the fire, and his face ached perpetually; but his eyes! his eyes! He was said to have caught a tukey-buzzard by the neck, the bird being deceived, and thinking he was looking another way; and several of the crowd said he was so cross-eyed he could *look at his own head*.²¹

As for the third type of remarkable persons, those with one extraordinary power, examples in both world folklore and Southwestern humor are innumerable. The strength of Samson and Hercules is paralleled by that of Mike Fink. The familiar Grimm fairy tale "The Wonderful Traveler" featured a hunter who could shoot a fly in the left eye from two miles off. In a Chinese folktale a marksman also shoots a serpent through the left eye from afar. One hardly need cite the shooting feats of Davy Crockett and Mike Fink as parallels. In

¹⁹Hooper, "A Night at the Ugly Man's," *Widow Rugby's Husband* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson and Brothers, 1851), p. 48.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

²¹C. F. M. Noland, "A Quarter Race in Kentucky," *A Quarter Race in Kentucky and Other Sketches*, ed. W. T. Porter (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1846), p. 17.

one yarn the two frontier Nimrods matched their skill performing such prodigies as hitting a pig's ear from a raft in the middle of the river. In this hectic match Mike won out when Davy's gallantry prevented him from shooting the comb out of his own wife's hair. More realistic accounts of backwoods shooting feats did not, of course, make such fantastic claims for their heroes.

To summarize, the relationship of motifs in the Old Southwestern yarns and in the folklore of the world has been insufficiently recognized. Similarities have been pointed out here in tales of the origin of races, in the humanizing of animals, and the creation of mythical beasts. It has also been pointed out that Southwestern folktales contain their share of remarkable persons: that is, giants, giantesses, dwarfs, grotesques, and persons with one remarkable power. Although these comparisons merely skim the surface and in no way plumb the depths of the interrelationship, it is hoped that they are sufficient to prove something fundamental about human nature and to indicate that mysterious manner of communication which has seemingly linked one culture to another since the beginning of time.

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TALES FROM ARKANSAS

by VANCE RANDOLPH

THE STORIES set down here were obtained from my friends and neighbors, who know many similar tales. Such items were very numerous in the early days, but are less common now. I have collected several hundred such stories since 1920.¹ Some were taken down in shorthand, others recorded on aluminum discs. More often I made notes in pencil as the story-teller spoke, and typed the material before the notes grew cold. I did not combine different versions, or use material from more than one informant in the same text. The tales are not retold or rewritten or re-created. I just transcribed each story as accurately as possible, and let it go at that.

We Call It Lapland²

One time there was several families come from back east somewheres, and homesteaded on the other side of Blytheville, Arkansas. It was pretty near fifty miles south of the Missouri line, and them peckerwoods thought they was living in Missouri. They went around saying "You got to show me!" and bragging how Missouri is the garden spot of all creation. Most of them was poor ignorant people, not much better than Yankees if the truth was knowed.

After while the country got more settled up, and then a gang of government surveyors come out to put up stone markers. The homesteaders didn't pay no attention at first, but when they seen where the state line was marked they set up a terrible holler. The damn fools says they don't want to live in Arkansas, because the Arkansas climate ain't healthy, and the people in Arkansas can't read nor write! Also they says Arkansas is full of bears and panthers and copperhead snakes, so it ain't safe for civilized folks to stay there over night even! The surveyors tried to explain how the whole bunch had been a-living in Arkansas all this time, but it wasn't no use. Them people was so dumb they couldn't get it through their head.

¹*Southern Folklore Quarterly*, XIV, 2, 1950, 79-86; XVI, 3, 1952, 165-176. *Hoosier Folklore*, IX, 2, 1950, 37-48. *Western Folklore*, X, 1, 1951, 1-10. *Journal of American Folklore*, 65, 1952, 159-166. *Midwest Folklore*, II, 2, 1952, 77-90.

²Told by by Marcus Freck, Beardstown, Ill., August, 1925. He heard it at Hot Springs, Ark., about 1898.

Right in the middle of all this trouble the head surveyor fell in love with a young widow-woman over on the St. Francis. The surveyors all boarded at her house, and she was the best cook in the whole country. The widow-woman says she was born and raised right here in Missouri, and it would break her heart to be surveyed out of her home. But nobody can make her live in Arkansas, no matter what happens. If the new line goes through she will sell out and move up North, even if she has to scrub floors for a living. And then she begun to cry. The head surveyor felt awful bad, and he didn't know what to do about it. Finally one of the other surveyors says "Listen, chief, this is wild country, and Washington is a long way off. The land here ain't worth nothing, anyhow."

The head surveyor studied awhile, and finally he moved the state line markers fifty miles south, so as to make a big jog between the St. Francis River and the Mississippi. Then they run the line on out west somewhere, and pretty soon the head surveyor quit his job. He says to himself well, twenty years from now some other surveyor will put the line back where it belongs. But me and the widow-woman will be dead by that time, so it won't make no difference.

Well sir, all that happened a long time ago, but the widow-woman's jog is still there. Her and the head surveyor got married all right, and raised a big family. Some of their great-grandchildren are living on the old farm, and the old farm is still in Missouri. Look at the map, and you'll see the southeast corner of Missouri sticking down like the heel of a boot, which is why some people call it the Boot Heel country. But us folks that live in Arkansas mostly call it Lapland, because it's the place where Missouri laps over into Arkansas.

There ain't no hard feelings about it nowadays. We don't begrudge them two counties to the Pukes, any more than we mind paying taxes for the lunatic asylum in Little Rock. Folks that don't want to live in Arkansas ain't quite right in their head, anyhow. It's better to keep people like that together in one place, rather than have 'em a-running around loose.

The Bolster³

One time there was some folks had a lot of company all at once, and the house was pretty crowded. After they got everybody settled down for the night there was one boy and one girl left over, so they

³Told by a gentleman at Hot Springs, Ark., March, 1938. He said it was a common story among backwoods folk about 1900.

had to put 'em in the same bed. It ain't so bad as you might think, because they was in a big room with a lot of beds, and grown folks a-sleeping all around 'em. Just for the looks of the thing, the old woman put an old-fashioned bolster in the middle of the bed. A bolster is like a big long pillow, but stuffed a lot harder than common pillows are nowadays.

The boy didn't go to sleep for a long time, because he was thinking about the pretty girl in bed with him. He knowed the girl was awake too, but there wasn't nothing he could do about it. The moon was a-shining right in onto the bed, and there was all them people right in the same room. Also the boy hadn't never seen the girl until that day, and didn't know what kind of a girl she was, or how she was going to act. He didn't want to raise no disturbance, and maybe get throwed right out of the house. So the boy just laid there, and finally he went to sleep.

When he woke up next morning the womenfolks was all dressed, and they was cooking breakfast. The girl acted pleasant enough, but she didn't talk much. Along that evening him and her went a-walking down by the spring branch, and they come to a fence without no gate in sight. "I can jump over easy enough," says the girl, "but I'm afraid you'll have to go around." The boy just stared at her. "What are you talking about?" he says. The girl kind of giggled. "Well," says she, "a fellow that can't climb over a bolster ain't going to have much luck with a five-rail fence."

The story don't say what the boy done after that, but it ain't hard to guess. Him and her didn't get back to the house till pretty late, anyhow.

Wild Pigeons⁴

One time there was some fellows started to sail across the sea in a big ship. There wasn't no engine in the ship, they just had big sails to catch the wind. When the wind died down the ship wouldn't go, so they just waited till the wind started blowing again. It took a long time to sail across the ocean in them days.

The ship had got about half way across when the wind quit blowing, so the sailors didn't have nothing to do. They just set around and played cards mostly. The people was not worried, because they had barrels of good water to drink, and plenty of salt meat and potatoes.

⁴Told by L. C. Baynes, Fort Smith, Ark., June, 1929. He got the story from Pete Gantrot of Hot Springs, Ark., about 1895.

They had wine and whiskey too, so everybody figured they was doing all right. One day there was a lot of birds come along, and some of them lit down on the ship. They was wild pigeons, just like them big flocks we used to see back home. The pigeons was so tired they couldn't fly no more, and the sailors killed 'em with sticks. The boys was glad to get them pigeons, as it would be a change from rusty old pork all the time. The cook made a fine pie out of dried apples to go with the dinner. And one fellow says it is good luck, because God must have sent them pigeons so we could have something better to eat.

Next morning here come a lot more pigeons, and they lit on the ship. The sailors took sticks and killed all they wanted. But the pigeons just kept a-coming till the air was full of 'em, and you couldn't hardly see the sun. The whole ship was covered with feathers and blood and bird manure all over everything. The sailors was killing pigeons fast as they could, and throwing 'em in the sea. Everybody in the ship was up to their waist in pigeons, and finally one fellow fired off the little brass cannon. A lot of the pigeons flew up in the air for a minute, but they come right back. Them pigeons was so wore out they couldn't fly no further. They had to roost on the ship because it was out in the middle of the ocean, and there wasn't no other place for them to light.

The fellows on the ship seen they was in a bad fix. They all begun to shoot off guns and rockets, and some built fires to smoke the pigeons away. But the pigeons just kept a-piling up till the ship turned over on one side, and a lot of water rolled in. Some of the sailors tried to get off in a little boat with oars, but it didn't do no good. The pigeons just piled up on the little boat like bees a-swarming, and sunk the whole business. Just before dark the ship tipped over again, and took in a lot more water. When morning come the ship was plumb gone. There wasn't nothing left but a few big timbers, and a lot of boxes and barrels a-floating around.

The fellows that was on the ship all got drowned except one. A steamboat come along and the people seen this fellow a-floating because he had a cork jacket on, and he was holding onto a board besides. He had eat some dead pigeons, but he didn't have no water, because the water in the sea is too salty. The people in the steamboat picked him up and give him some water. But they couldn't understand what he said very good, because they was all foreigners. So when he told 'em what happened they thought the poor fellow must be crazy, because

everybody knows that birds couldn't sink a ship, even if they was big as cows. And the captain of the steamboat says it is one of them Yankee lies, so then the fellow knocked the captain flat down. He says no man can call me a Yankee, because I was born in Arkansas and my mother was a lady. After he done that, they put big iron handcuffs on him.

It was two years before that fellow got back to Little Rock, and lots of the home folks didn't believe the story neither. Because they knowed that wild pigeons don't go no place only to eat acorns, and it ain't likely that pigeons would be flying over the sea, because there ain't no oak trees there. But after while everybody seen that the pigeons was all gone, and nobody could find out what become of 'em. So maybe they did fly out over the ocean and got drowned, like the fellow says.

There is several people right here in Arkansas knowed that sailor well, and they can tell you all about him. But you better not write his name down in no book, because some of the kinfolks is still alive, and they wouldn't like it.

The Magic Window⁵

One time there was an old farmer named Hobbes and he had a pretty daughter to keep house for him. The old man was in poor health. He was kind of silly, but he had sense enough to keep an eye on Julie, because she was crazy about the boys. When old man Hobbes got so feeble he couldn't do the chores, he hired a young fellow named Jake. But he got another man to cut a hole in the wall and put glass in it, like a little round window. It was fixed so anybody could set by the fire, and look out to the barn and the chicken-house and the wood-pile. Whenever Julie went outdoors, the old man would watch through the glass, so he always knowed where she was at.

The first day the window was put in, Jake borrowed a goat from some folks down the creek, and turned it loose in the cow lot. Then he went in the house and looked out through the little window. "Paw Hobbes," says he, "I didn't know you had a goat." The old man says "I ain't had a goat on the place for years." But when he looked out through his little window, there was a goat on the roof of the shed. That night Jake took the goat back where he got it.

⁵Told by Mrs. Emma L. Dusenbury, Mena, Ark., April, 1938. She had it from an old-timer in the 1880's.

Next day Jake took a straw hat and fastened it on a sow's head with baling wire. When old man Hobbes looked out through his little window, there was a hog walking around with a straw hat on. Julie was out there too, and when she come back in the house the old man says "Did you see anything funny about that sow?" Julie says no, the sow looked just the same as always. The old farmer didn't say nothing more, but he was considerable upset.

On the third day the old man looked out through his little window, and there was Jake walking down the lane without no pants on. You could see his long red drawers, and his shirt-tail a-flapping in the wind. But a minute later he run around the corner where the old man couldn't see him, pulled on his overalls, and come walking in with an armful of wood. "What do you mean, running around without no pants on?" says old man Hobbes. Jake just looked at him. "What are you talking about?" he says.

The old farmer thought about it awhile. "First goats, then hogs with hats on, and now men without no pants!" says he. "Jake, I believe that new window is witched! Bust the glass out, and nail a board over the hole." Jake got the hammer and nailed up the window, so the old man couldn't see nothing out back of the house. After that him and Julie Hobbes went out to the barn whenever they felt like it, and done whatever they wanted to.

One Spoiled Tit⁶

One time there was an old farmer that said he was a little hard of hearing. The truth is, he was so deaf he couldn't hear it thunder. His cow had strayed off somewheres, and the old man walked all over the country asking folks if they had seen her, but they all shook their heads. Finally he met up with a preacher, and he says to the preacher "Will you tell all the church folks about my cow being lost?" The preacher nodded his head to mean yes. So that night the old man went to church. He figured that when the people heard about the cow, he could maybe find out where she was saw last.

The sermon was pretty long, but the deaf man set quiet till it was over. Then the preacher begun to tell the folks about a young couple that was going to get married. The fellow was a fine young man, he says. The girl was a teacher in the Sunday School, so the preacher laid it on pretty thick. He says this young lady is the cream of the

⁶Told by Mrs. Ethel Barnes, Hot Springs, Ark., April, 1938. She thought it dated at least to 1885.

crop and the flower of the flock and the pride of Durgenville, and then he says she is a fine sample of Christian womanhood, and a inspiration to young people all over the country.

The old man couldn't hear a word, but he figured the preacher was telling the people about his cow. So pretty soon he got up and hollered "Her rump's caved in, folks, and she's got one spoiled tit!"

The preacher just stood there with his mouth open, as he had forgot all about the old cow. Some of the young folks pretty near died laughing. The girl begun to bawl, and the young fellow says he will kill the old bastard if it's the last thing he ever done. The meeting busted in a terrible fight, and the sheriff grabbed the deaf man and run for the jail-house. The sheriff was in the church and heard the whole thing, so he figured the old man better be locked up for his own good.

It was away late in the night before things quietened down. Then the preacher and some other folks come to the jail and told the sheriff how it was. So they turned the old man loose, and a fellow that worked in the bank took him out home in a buggy. Some folks say that the deaf man never did get it through his head what all the trouble was about. The poor old fellow didn't come to town very often after that. He says everybody in the settlement is plumb crazy, and it ain't safe for a respectable citizen to go there nowadays.

The Man from Texas⁷

One time there was a fellow that lived in Arkansas, but he was born and raised in Texas. So most of the time he just set around bragging about the Lone Star state, and he says Texas is just the same as Paradise. The home folks didn't think much of this kind of talk, because it looked like he was running down Arkansas. Texas is all right maybe, but anybody that has been there knows it ain't no heaven on earth.

Pretty soon a man from Yellville begun to tell a story about a Texan that died, and he was trying to get into Heaven. Saint Peter talked with him awhile, but the Texan didn't do nothing but jingle his big spurs and brag up Texas. Finally Saint Peter opened the gate, and he says "Well, you can come in. But I'm afraid you won't like it

⁷Told by a gentleman in Harrison, Ark., April, 1950. He says that these gags were popular in the late 1870's; they are still printed occasionally in the Arkansas newspapers.

here." The Arkansawyers all laughed at that story, but the man from Texas says he don't see nothing funny about it.

So then a man from Hot Springs begun to tell a story about another Texan that died, and when he got to the pearly gates they ask where did he come from? "I was borned and raised in Texas," says he. The angel opened up the gate. "Come right in, brother," says the angel, "you have been in hell long enough!" The Arkansawyers all laughed at that story, but the man from Texas says he don't see nothing funny about it.

Next a fellow from Bald Knob told a story about another Texan that died, and when he come to the big gate it was wide open, so he could see what was going on inside. The Texan stood there a-fanning himself with his big hat, and he says "Gosh, I didn't know heaven was so much like Texas!" The gatekeeper just looked at him kind of sorrowful. "Son," says he, "this ain't Heaven." The Arkansawyers all laughed at that story, but the man from Texas says he don't see nothing funny about it.

Them fellows from Texas can read and write, fiddle and fight, knock up and throw down. They can holler loud, shoot straight, and jump high. But it seems like most of 'em is kind of dumb, when it comes to a funny story.

To Hell With Joplin*

One time old Milt Wilson took some hogs to Joplin, and after the hogs was sold he went to the hotel. They give him a fine room, and there was a good saloon right in the same building. The people in the dining room was kind of stuck-up, and Milt didn't like the looks of it. So he walked down the street and eat his supper in a little restaurant, where the victuals was served family style and the folks was more sociable.

Milt got to talking with a pretty girl, and come to find out she was raised on a farm down in Benton county, but now she lives in the hotel. She says it is kind of lonesome without no boy friend, but she likes a man that is growed up and sensible. Her and Milt got pretty friendly after that, and drunk a couple bottles beer together. Pretty soon she says "Listen, Mister Wilson, my room is just down the hall from yours. Just leave your door unlocked, and after while I will slip

*Told by an elderly gentleman in Carroll county, Ark., July, 1948.

down there, and them stuck-up hotel people don't need to know nothing about it."

The first thing Milt done was go in the barbership and get a clean shave. He got his hair cut too, and told the barber to put some perfume on it. Then he bought a quart of good whiskey and took it up to his room. He put on his clean nightshirt, and went to bed just like the pretty girl said. He hid the wallet in one of his boots, so as not to take no chances. And then he just laid there and waited.

Pretty soon it was ten o'clock, but the pretty girl didn't show up yet. Milt took a couple drinks, and then he crawled back in bed and waited. After while he got up and drunk some more whiskey. It was right at eleven o'clock by this time, but people was still walking around in the hall, and Milt figured the pretty girl couldn't come till everything is quiet. So he just laid there and waited. After while he went to sleep.

It was just getting light outdoors when Milt woke up. Soon as he found the wallet was empty he set up a terrible holler. The fellow at the desk says there ain't no pretty girl in the hotel, only two old ladies. He says a grown man ought to know enough to lock his door at night. And why didn't you give me your \$600, so I could put it in the safe? It looks like you been drinking, and maybe you lost your money somewheres else, before you come to the hotel. Also he says probably you didn't have no \$600, anyhow. And if you don't shut up I will call the policeman, as we don't allow no hollering in here because the people is trying to sleep.

After while Milt went down to the restaurant and asked them about the pretty girl. But the restaurant man says he ain't seen a pretty girl for many years, and she was a cooch-dancer at the World's Fair in Saint Louis, about 1904. Also he says if some apple-knockers has lost their pocketbook it ain't no skin off of him, and he don't want to hear no more about it. Milt seen them people was all in cahoots, and there wasn't nothing he could do about it. So he just got on the train and come back home.

But ever since that time, Milt Wilson is always talking about how they got a very low moral tone in Joplin. He says Joplin is crowded with thieves and strumpets from all over the country. God-fearing Christian folks and had better keep away from a town like that, he says, and do their trading somewheres else.

They All Started from Scratch⁹

One time there was a horse trader married an Osage woman, and got rich when they struck oil in Oklahoma. He had five boys, and sent them all to college. But after they got through college he would not give them no more money. So the boys went to the city and made their own living. They was mostly salesmen or else worked in filling stations, and it was pretty hard sledding. They all married city girls that had went to college too, so naturally they didn't have no children.

The horse trader was getting pretty old, and the Osage woman was dead a long time ago. There was plenty of hired help to wait on him, but it was kind of lonesome in the big house. Also he got to worrying about something. He sent all the boys a ticket, so they could bring their wife and come back home for Christmas. There was five nice bedrooms in the house, and the old man was fixing to throw a big old-fashioned Oklahoma party.

They had a fine time, and everybody ate turkey and drunk wine so they was feeling pretty good. After dinner the old man got them together in the big settting, room, with a log fire a-goin'. And then he says I am going to make a speech, and I want all of you to hear it. So everybody lit their cigarette and set down to listen. And then the old man says "You are all healthy, and your wives is young. What I want to know is, how come I ain't got no grandchildren?"

Them five women looked at each other, and some of 'em giggled. The boys all looked straight at the old man, because they was Indians. After while the oldest one spoke up, and he says it takes money to raise families. The old man scowled. "Me and your maw didn't have a pot to cook in," he says. "We slept in a rawhide wigwam. We lived on wild onions and high wind. Sometimes the onions didn't hit, and the wind stopped a-blowing." The boys just set there poker-faced, but the old man knowed what they was thinking about. "The first couple that shows me a live grandchild," says he, "I'll give 'em twenty-five thousand dollars cash. In small bills, and no tax to pay." With that he leaned back in the big leather chair, and shut his eyes.

Nobody said a word, but when the old man opened his eyes the boys and girls was gone. Pretty soon he pulled off his high-heeled boots, and walked down the hall in his sock feet. He listened a minute at every one of them bedroom doors, and then he grinned a little. "Them

⁹Told by Walter J. Hazlewood, Eureka Springs, Ark., August, 1950. He heard the yarn at Fort Smith, Ark., in 1941.

boys take after their maw," says he. "Plenty of action, not much talk. Well, I reckon they all started from scratch." And then he says something in the Osage language about rabbits. What it really means is, that there's always grass in the Territory, and water under the trees.

The Cat's Foot¹⁰

One time there was a fellow over in the Territory, and he was losing meat. That was a terrible bad thing, because country folks was honest in them days, and nobody ever thought of locking their smokehouse door. If somebody run out of meat he just come to his neighbor like a man and borrowed a couple of hams or a side of bacon, and paid it back when he could. Things is different nowadays, of course.

Well sir, this fellow which his meat was gone didn't say nothing, but he went and hid in the smokehouse. Pretty soon a great big cat walked in. It was pretty near as big as a panther. The fellow drewed his bowie knife, twelve inches long and sharp as a razor. When the big cat pulled down a ham the fellow give a lunge, and cut one of its feet right off. Then he run for the house, and got in bed. The big cat was a-tearing around outside, a-screaming fit to wake the dead. Finally it quietened down, but the folks didn't get much sleep that night.

Next morning a peckerwood come a-riding in to get the doctor. He says his wife was fooling with the axe, and cut her foot off accidental. The woman bled to death, in spite of all Doc could do. They say she died a-yowling and a-spitting like a cat. Some of the neighbors told it around that they found a woman's foot in the smokehouse. Maybe they did, and then again it might be they didn't. But the fellow never lost no more meat, anyhow.

Adam and Eve¹¹

One time there was a preacher that couldn't read, but he knowed most of the Book by heart, and preached better than lots of these here educated parsons. Sometimes he would tell funny stories about people in the Old Testament. Them stories ain't in the Bible at all, so maybe he just made 'em up as he went along.

Like the time he was telling about what Adam and Eve done

¹⁰Told by Lon Jordan, Farmington, Ark., December, 1941. A common story, he says, near Farmington in the early 1900's.

¹¹Told by a gentleman who must remain anonymous, Siloam Springs, Ark., July, 1949. He heard the tale in Newton county, Ark., and insists that it "ain't far from the truth."

after they was throwed out of Eden. It seemed like they lived in a little town, and every morning they walked out to the farm where they was cutting sprouts for some foreigner. It was a long way and a rough road, and the whole family was barefooted. One evening they was dragging home all tired out, and they come past a fine plantation, with a white house and a good spring right by the road. There was a big apple orchard, and a red barn, and bluegrass in the front yard, and nice flower-beds on both sides of the porch.

One of the little boys looked in between the palings, and seen how everything was. "Mammy," says he, "wouldn't it be fine if we lived in a place like that?" Eve didn't return no answer, but Adam says "Son, me and maw used to live in that very place, before you was borned." The kids was all surprised to hear it. "Pappy," says one of the girls, "how come we ain't there now?" Adam grinned a little. "Well," says he, "the facts of the matter is, your mammy just eat us out of house and home!" Eve looked at Adam out of the corner of her eye, and then both busted out laughing.

Some high-collared people in town thought it was wrong for a preacher to tell stories like that, but us home folks don't see no harm in it. We knowed that if God Almighty didn't like them sermons He could put a stop to it easy enough. And so long as the Lord God figured that our preacher was doing all right, who cares what them educated son-of-a-bitches think about it?

Eureka Springs, Arkansas

BOOK REVIEWS

The World's Great Folktales. Arranged and edited by James R. Foster.
New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953. x, 330 pp. \$3.95.

AMONG THE WITCHES, wizards, and evil magicians who populate an undue share of Editor Foster's pages should be included that genius of publishing malpractice who made up this book. For the benefit of those who may desire to read, I include the only workable prescription for managing the book and maintaining one's sanity: place the open book back down upon the palm, the extended thumb, and the forefinger of the left hand; with the remaining digits hooking forward below the book, use the little finger to mark the headnotes to the particular section you are perusing, the ring finger to hold open the pages you are reading, and the middle finger to keep your place in the notes at the back of the book. This leaves the right hand free to turn pages, take notes, or write infuriated letters to the publisher. In all seriousness and with full realization of the financial problems of printing, I maintain that some way of assembling such books can be contrived, not necessarily to suit the scholar but certainly to serve the reader for whom this book may have been intended (about him, more anon). If there must be sectional headnotes, let them not include data applicable only to a single member within the section. If there is interesting information, such as Professor Foster does assemble, pertinent to a single tale, let it appear with that tale. And then let the small-type appendix of notes at the rear entomb the uninteresting-to-the-layman bibliographical (less inadequate than in this volume) and other scholarly (here totally absent) paraphernalia that may please the patient specialist who does not expect to catch publishers considering his comforts.

But what of *The World's Great Folktales*? First of all, these are not primarily the world's classic folktales, and I would guess from Professor Foster's notes—his preface to the contrary—that he knows it. Although there is included a sprinkling of the "classics" recognized in Aarne-Thompson (among them, beautiful examples of Tale-Types 425 and 303, neither version being easily available), the majority are legend or myth materials, tales of belief, local superstitions, ghost stories, and the like. In nearly every one of the ninety tales, however, there does occur one or more folk-motifs, some of which are discussed learnedly

and entertainingly in the notes—the small-type ones at the end. Incidentally, those notes lead to some doubts as to whether the editor is conscious of the Thompson and Aarne-Thompson indexes or even, though he cites Grimm analogs, of the Bolte-Polivka annotation.

In fact, the notes pose several problems. The bibliographical notes at the head of each section (there is no bibliography) sometimes mystify. Ten tales are clearly identified as translations from specific sources (eight of them French), while others are clearly identified paraphrases of specific works (sometimes from translations). But there are hazy references to "editor's versions"; e.g. one story is "based on" a specific story from the *Panchatantra*, but a later one is "based on" Benfey's translation of the *Panchatantra*, and (the complete ascription) "'Ra and Isis' is the editor's version of this old myth." This is not a book for scholars, but if references are worth giving, they may as well bear meaning and maintain an even level of communication. The notes hidden in the appendix I have already said have very real virtues, but the dogged determination that each story shall have at least one learned comment all of its own leads to some fairly light-weight annotations—the complete exegesis for one tale being, "Magic music occurs often in folktales!"

For whom is all this intended? For almost everybody—it says so in the preface. And the purpose is to acquaint that large audience with folktale "classics," "the world of the folktale," and "the popular imagination." It does present a few "classics" in classic form and a few others in forms the authenticity of which a folklorist would question. The picture given of the folktale world is distorted and out of perspective. But it certainly does give a good picture of one side of popular imagination, that side which rests upon belief or upon the fear to disbelieve, illustrated by the thirteen whimsical subject-headings under which the tales are grouped: "Werewolves and Some Other Animals," "Saints and Sinners," and "More Ghosts" being among my favorites (the distinctions are neither clearly defined nor consistently observed).

The volume is easy, enjoyable, and fairly adult reading. Incidentally, for the folklore instructor who is willing to give the time to filling in the gaps and explaining what the book is not, here is, now that Rugoff and Lee are both out of print, a possible class reading in international folk-narrative.

The University of Kentucky

WILLIAM HUGH JANSEN

Four Symposia on Folklore: Midcentury International Folklore Conference; Indiana University, July 21-August 4, 1955. Edited by Stith Thompson, Indiana University Publications: Folklore Series, No. 8. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953. xi, 340 pp. \$3.50.

The discussions at the Indiana University Midcentury International Folklore Conference were recorded in their entirety and laboriously transcribed. In their edition by Dean Stith Thompson, the only items omitted appear to be a few occasional hesitations or inadvertent repetitions, which would simply add bulk to the record. Everything else—all the clear, earnest discourse of the assembled scholars—is there.

The conference was arranged in a series of four alternating symposia, respectively focused on collecting, archiving, making available, and studying the materials and processes of folklore. In the present volume, the various sessions are grouped together, each symposium appearing in its continuity. A foreword by Dr. Thompson gives general information about the entire conference, and lists the special lecturers and those who took part in the discussion. Also useful are an appended list of published works referred to by the speakers and an index of persons and subjects.

Despite the excellent organization of this edition, the matter in the symposia is obviously too rich, varied and interlocking to allow of a detailed survey. This reviewer will therefore mention only some general aspects that convinced him that the conference and its publication *in toto* form a distinguished service to students of folklore.

Ordinarily, a session opened with extended remarks prepared by a scholar as the basis for general comments. In the ensuing discussions it was apparent how interwoven are the four chief topics selected. Discourse on one of them often tended to get off onto another, and the various chairmen did fine work in keeping on the track some discussions that had fair to digress constantly from one immediately related topic to another like a Coleridgean essay. Mainly, however, the speakers hewed to the line; but as the sessions unrolled, there were few, if any folkloristic aspects or problems of importance that they did not consider.

The fact that European and Asiatic scholars of international repute were speaking with authority in these symposia was enough to make any discussion stimulating to American students as well as informative. But the speakers, by their mere bearing, taught, many valu-

able lessons aside from those imparted by their erudition. The entire tone of the meetings was unpretentious; and the quiet, earnest straightforward inquiry of the participants; the absence of dogmatism and obtrusiveness; the prevailing modesty, sincerity and good humor of the gatherings, gave attentive listeners not only a rich fund of information, but a fine object lesson in genuine scholarly attitude toward folklore studies. All these qualities come out clearly in this edition.

It is significant that these meetings wasted no time or effort on finding a common definition for the term *folklore* or delimiting its scope. Yet varying views on the meaning of the term emerged throughout the sessions, especially in those devoted to studying folklore (see pp. 248-266). Equally significant, however, was the mutual understanding evident among the speakers about the general nature of the phenomena under discussion: The visiting old-world scholars were ethnologists whose "extensive view" surveyed entire ethnic cultures, and comprehended the interrelations of spiritual and material traditions.

Striking was the variety of approaches and methods elicited by international note-comparing in these sessions: various attitudes about payment to informants, and what to tell them; about methods of museum work and other publicizing efforts; about methods of archiving and collecting. There were vivid descriptions of museums and archives, and field methods aplenty were explained, debated, and illustrated by reminiscent anecdotes.

It was inevitable that discussions of differing methods and aims should bring out disagreeing viewpoints, all of which were fully heard and commented upon. The most uncertainty—even confusion—seemed to the present reviewer to attend the remarks on "making folklore available." Often so many successive remarks brought out so many divergent questions that the reader was bewildered by the evident many-sidedness of the main themes. This is wholesome, however; and also wholesome is the fact that throughout the meetings there was no attempt at anything which could be called oversimplification: the scholars attacked the problems in all their natural complexity.

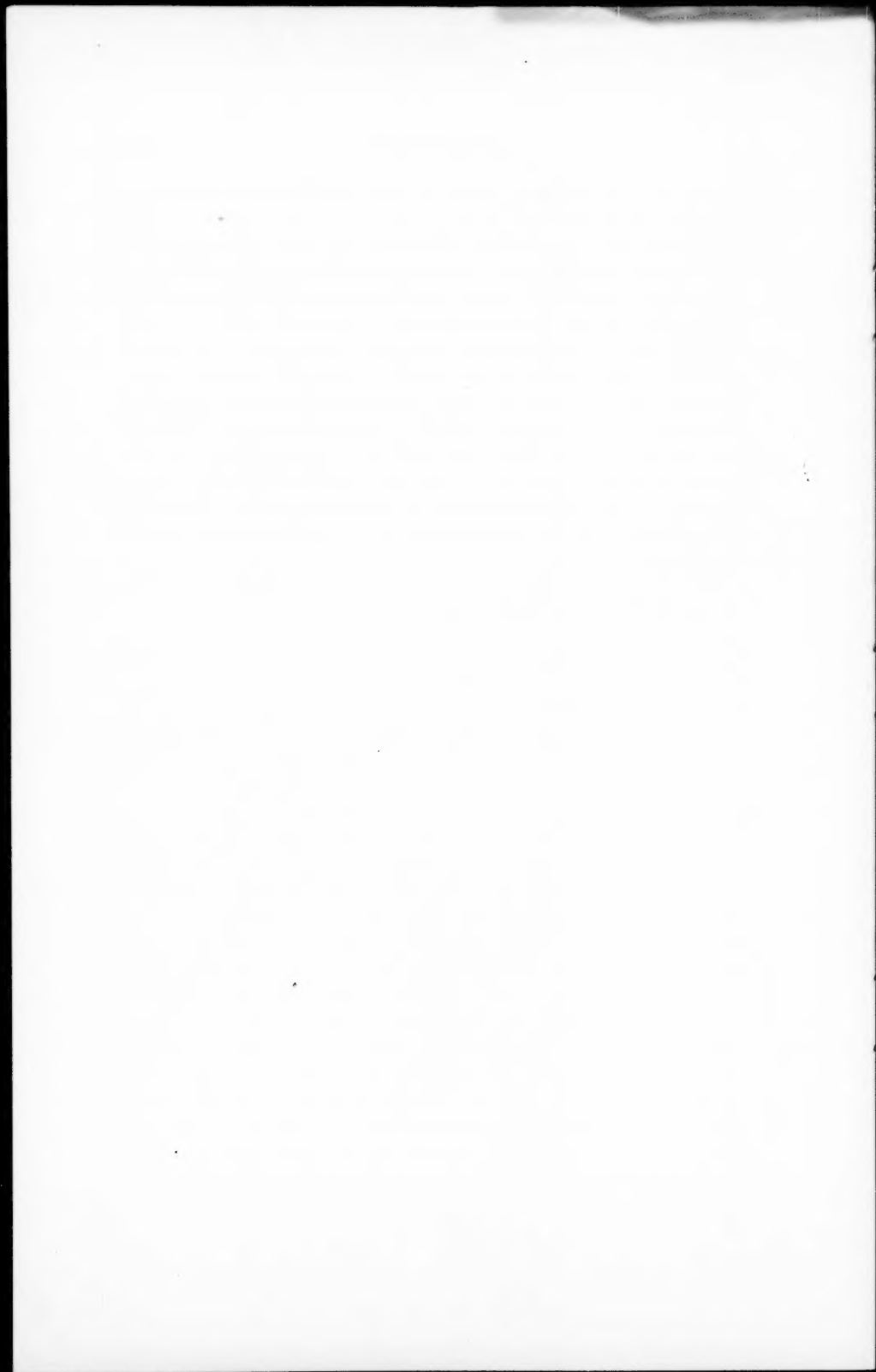
In the debates on utilizing folklore, there were reviewed all the very sorts of questions of its real utility that must have occurred to many of us so often, considering the moribund state of most folk culture (see pp. 220-227). There was also some disagreement (and some informative discussion) on uses of motif index and typological work in folktale studies, as likewise about the interrelated historic-geographic

studies, and the finding of earlier or archetypal forms of folk narratives (pp. 273-281).

Finally, not a little of the value of the symposia lies in incidental remarks and generalizations frequently uttered by these masters of folklore investigation—so many crystallizations of many years' work and thought on their part. Instances are Thompson's reflections (pp. 270-271) on the necessity of relying heavily on internal evidence; on the gradual improvement of typological studies with increased experience; and on the dangers of close analogies between folklore and other disciplines, e.g. Indo-European philology. Another instance is Christiansen's remark (p. 118), "We have found that when people tell of immediate experiences they do not fall into traditional patterns." Such examples of field and study experience (abundant in these symposia), when reflected upon, are very illuminating in many ways to the student of folklore.

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